



World Communion
of Reformed Churches

Executive Committee Minutes 2023

“COVENANTING IN GOD’S MISSION”



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**World Communion of Reformed Churches
Executive Committee Meeting
20-24 May 2023
Mannah Executive Guest Lodge
Kempton Park, South Africa**

Theme: “Covenanting in God’s Mission”

I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. —Hosea 2:18 (NRSV)

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PARTICIPANTS

Officers

President

Najla Kassab, National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon

Vice-Presidents

Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Raíssa Vieira Brasil, United Presbyterian Church of Brazil

Lisa Vander Wal, Reformed Church in America

Treasurer

Johann Weusmann, Evangelical Church in the Rheinland

Collegial General Secretariat

Hanns Lessing, Evangelical Church of Westphalia

Muna Nassar

Philip Vinod Peacock, Church of North India

Phil Tanis, Reformed Church in America

Members

Michael Blair, United Church of Canada (alternate)

Wertson Brasil, AIPRAL

Clayton Da Silva Leal, Independent Presbyterian Church in Brazil

Hefin Jones, Union of Welsh Independents

Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago

Hong Jung Lee, Presbyterian Church of Korea

Angela Martins, CANAAC

Coutinho Maravillhoso Moma, Evangelical Congregational Church in Angola

Veronica Muchiri, Presbyterian Church of East Africa

Tibonge Ng'ambi, United Church in Zambia

Khid-arn Prawate, Church of Christ in Thailand

Milciades Pua, Presbyterian Church of Colombia

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, WCRC Europe

Ecumenical Guests

Sindiso Jele, Council for World Mission

Paul Tche, Disciples of Christ World Communion

Martin Pühn, Evangelical Church in Germany

Danisa Ndlovu, Mennonite World Conference

Mthokozisi Selby Khumalo, Penetcostal World Fellowship

John Wesley Kabango, United Evangelical Mission

Athena Peralta, World Council of Churches

Staff and Consultants

Serge Fornerod, representative to the John Knox International Centre
Sue Rheem, officer for the Presbyterian Ministry to the United Nations

Minute Taker

Zwai Mtyhobile

Interpreter

Stephan van Tonder

Host Representatives

Gustav Claassen, Dutch Reformed Church
Leepo Modise, Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa
Lungile Mpetsheni, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
Paul Dingaan, Maranatha Reformed Church of Christ
Wouter van Wyk, Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika

Stewards

Joseas Chokwe
Bongiwe Dipa
Skhumbuzo Kamogelo Nkone
Bandile Ngubane
Salamina Tsolo

TIMETABLE

Please note: the published timetable changed during the course of the meeting. For a more accurate reflection of the sequence of events, please refer to the Narrative Record.

Saturday, 20 May

- 10:00: Officers' Committee meeting
- 16:00: Opening Worship
- 17:30: ZacTax Launch

Sunday, 21 May

- AM: Worship with local congregations
- 15:00: Initial Business Session
- 15:30: Plenary Listening Session
Address of the President
Summations of CGS, SPPG, and GCPC reports
- 18:30: Dinner
- 19:30: Discernment Session
- 21:00: Drafting Team

Monday, 22 May

- 8:30: Morning Prayers (ACRC)
- 9:00: Plenary Decision Session
- 10:00: Plenary Listening Session
Reports from United Nations Ministry and John Knox International Centre
Ecumenical Greetings 1
- 11:00: Committee Meetings: Constitution & Membership, Partnership Fund,
Finance
- 13:00: Lunch
- 14:30: Plenary Listening Session
Finance Report
Report of The Committee
- 16:00: Discernment Session
- 18:30: Dinner
- 19:30: Presentation by WCRC member churches in South Africa
- 21:00: Drafting Team / Message Committee

Tuesday, 23 May

- 8:30: Morning Prayers (CANAAC)
- 9:00: Plenary Decision Session
- 10:30: Plenary Listening Session
Reports from the Regions
Ecumenical Greetings 2

Introductory Items

- Noon: Lunch
PM: Local immersion (Constitution Hill)
18:00: Braai with music and a presentation
21:00: Message Committee

Wednesday, 24 May

- 8:30: Morning Prayers (AIPRAL)
9:00: Plenary Listening & Decision Session
Remaining Recommendations
Message Committee Report
9:30: Plenary Listening Session
Reports from the regions
Ecumenical Greetings
GRAPE Presentations
11:45: Michigan Corporation
Noon: Closing Worship
PM: Departures

ACTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2023

The Executive Committee:

Rules of Procedure for the Executive Committee (Discernment Procedures)

1. Approved the Rules of Procedure for use in the Executive Committee.

Executive Committee Minutes 2022

2. Approved the minutes of the Executive Committee 2022 as a correct record of the meeting.

Appointments

3. Appointed the following groups, team, and committee:

Discernment Group 1

Lisa Vander Wal (facilitator), Michael Blair (scribe), Tibonge Ng'ambi, Milciades Pua, Wertson Brasil, Serge Fornerod, Sindiso Jele, Salamina Tsolo

Discernment Group 2

Samuel Ayete-Nyampong (facilitator), Hefin Jones (scribe), Hong Jung Lee, Susan Thomas, Clayton Da Silva, Danisa Ndlovu, Skhumbuzo Kamogelo Nkone

Discernment Group 3

Raïssa Vieira Brasil (facilitator), Angela Martins (scribe), Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, Veronica Muchiri, Paul Tch , Athena Peralta, Mthokozisi Selby Khumalo, Bongwiwe Dippa, Phil Tanis

Discernment Group 4

Johann Weusmann (facilitator), Annabell Lalla-Rankelawan (scribe), Coutinho Maravillhoso Moma, Khid-arn Prawate, John Wesley Kabango, Sue Rheem, Joseas Chokwe, Bandile Ngubane

Drafting Team: Michael Blair, Hefin Jones, Angela Martins, Annabell Lalla-Rankelawan, Hanns Lessing (staff support)

Message Committee: Veronica Muchiri (moderator), Tibonge Ng'ambi, Hong Jung Lee, Wertson Brasil, Sue Rheem, South African Church Representative, Muna Nassar (staff), with invited advisors from the South Africa member churches.

Address of the President

4. Received the Address of the President.

Report of the Collegial General Secretariat

5. Received the Report of the Collegial General Secretariat and referred the section on the Reformed Partnership Fund to the Reformed Partnership Fund Committee for review and report, including any recommendations.

Report of the Strategic Plan Programme Group

6. Received the Report of the Strategic Plan Programme Group.

Report of the General Council Planning Committee

7. Received the Report of the General Council Planning Committee and referred it to discernment groups.

Advisor from Asia

8. Approved that a process be put into motion to receive into the Officers' Committee an advisor for Asia, from the Asian region and who is well versed with the life and witness of the Asian churches, who will help strengthen Communion relations with Asian members.

General Council Planning Committee

9. Agreed that the General Council Planning Committee should reconsider the programmatic design of General Council 2025 with the number of days that General Council be reduced determined through a process of re-imagining what General Council could look like utilizing in-person and Zoom spaces to deliver the overall programme.

10. Agreed that the General Council Planning Committee note the view of retaining Pre-Council caucus groups as a part of overall design. However, this comes in the context of the broader recommendation of re-imagining what General Council could look like and how these would fit into that design. Additionally, that consideration is given to assignment of space potentially for partners who may wish to "meet" within the confines of the General Council space. The process for this would have to be clearly mapped out.

11. Agreed that the special caucus groups be made up of: women, youth, Indigenous people, and people with disabilities.

12. Agreed that the Leadership Advisory Group be set up as detailed in the GCPC Report and that care is taken to ensure that member churches understand that the nominations process takes place at the General Council only, and that the correspondence sent to them is shared with regions.

13. Agreed that the Public Issues Planning Group be set up to design the processes which among other things govern the setting of deadlines for submissions from member churches and other such arrangements for holding hearings and for the design of the Public Issues report.

14. Agreed that there is a need to develop a fundraising plan which has multiple tiers and which allows member churches and individuals to see possibilities to support the General Council. This takes into consideration both large and small donation packages, but the level of detail which the plan would include should allow member churches to see what their funding support would achieve rather than simply then giving money for the General Council blindly. Accounting and communication remain as important components of this planning process.

15. Agreed that the development of a strategic fundraising plan would have close coordination with regions and their fundraising networks and other partners. Resources as needed would be created specific to a particular region/need.

16. Agreed that subsidized delegates would pay a registration fee of 300 euros and 700 euros as a contribution for a total of 1000 euros of their cost with the WCRC picking up the remainder, and self-supporting delegates pay a registration fee of 500 euros only.

17. Agreed that the creation of a Just Participation Fund is seen as conceptually sound but requires its own strategic fundraising approach. It needs to be costed so that member churches or individuals can be clear how their support will support the presence of women and youth at the General Council. In this consideration the matter of support to Indigenous people and persons with disabilities is noted as being absent and should be included.

Report of the Ministry to the United Nations

18. Received the Report of the Ministry to the United Nations.

John Knox International Centre

19. Received the Report on the John Knox International Centre.

Finance and Budget

20. Approved the 2022 financial statement.

21. Accepted the 2022 Audit Report.

22. Agreed that the Acting General Secretary and General Treasurer are exonerated for the budget, economic management, and asset administration of the WCRC for the accounting year 2022.

23. Agreed that the audit of the 2023 financial statement be carried out by the High Audit Office of the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*.

24. Approved 2023 provisional budget.

25. Authorized the Officers' Committee to give preliminary approval to a balanced budget for 2024 subject to final approval at the 2024 Executive Committee meeting.

26. Agreed that double-entry bookkeeping be implemented by budget year 2025.

Report of The Committee

27. Received the report of The Committee and referred it to discernment groups.

Constitution and Membership Committee

28. Received the Report of the Constitution and Membership Committee and referred it to discernment groups.

Reformed Partnership Fund Committee

29. Received the Report of the Reformed Partnership Fund Committee and referred it to discernment groups.

Communications and Fundraising

30. Agreed that a fundraising strategy be developed for the WCRC which would include the following:

- a. Clear responsibilities of both the global (including the Executive Committee) and regional bodies to guide cooperative work to strengthen the Communion in this area.
- b. Keeping in mind the diversity of the Communion, customized approaches either regionally or nationally to best engage with regions, members, congregations, and individuals

- c. Fundraising materials, including brochures, videos, etc., along with the use of current technologies and media.
- d. Communion-wide fundraising efforts, such as the annual appeal and the developing Reformation/WCRC Sunday, both of which should not only be continued but also expanded.

31. Authorized the Officers' Committee to bring a proposal to an extraordinary virtual Executive Committee meeting to ensure communications continues upon the completion of the current communication executive's term in 2024.

Membership

32. Directed the Constitution and Membership Committee to review all categories of membership in the constitution and bylaws to allow a greater diversity of levels of engagement, including how membership within the regional councils functions and to ensure that there is clarity in affiliate and associate memberships.

33. Asked the Constitution and Membership Committee to 1) review the current levels of membership dues, 2) consider ways in which these dues can be "paid" (e.g. through in-kind donations), 3) conduct a "sustainability audit" of the Communion, the resources available, in the Communion and the possibilities that open or limitation that impose. All donations should be properly acknowledged and in-kind gifts should be given a value.

34. Asked that, in an aligned arrangement with the global office, members of the Executive Committee contact the heads of member churches in their regions, reaching out to nurture relations and facilitate their participation in the work of the WCRC.

Proposed Constitutional Amendments

35. Proposed an amendment to the WCRC Constitution as follows: When the position of General Secretary becomes vacant due to exigent or emergency situation, the Officers of the WCRC are empowered to appoint an Acting General Secretary until such time as the Executive Committee can be convened to determine the way forward.

36. Referred the other two proposed amendments to the Constitution and Membership Committee for further review, including possible incorporation into the bylaws.

Reformed Partnership Fund

37. Agreed that in light of the fact that the Reformed Partnership Fund has been able to make significant contributions to member churches in the past the Committee be encouraged to look for new sources of funding going forward, with regions involved in supporting the fund.

Leadership

38. Agreed that:

1. The CGS model is to be discontinued upon the appointment of an Acting General Secretary.
2. The process to elect an Acting General Secretary, who will serve through the 2025 General Council will be as follows:
 - a) The Officers will name a special committee to recommend through interview a candidate as Acting General Secretary.
 - b) At the same time, interviews will be held of the four Executive Secretaries who currently compose the CGS and veteran church leaders with full familiarity with the work of WCRC and with proven success in leading organizations, raising funds, and supervising a multicultural team.
 - c) Once a candidate is selected for recommendation, the WCRC Executive Committee will meet in a virtual extraordinary session to vote on the nominee.

Message

39. Approved the Message from the 2023 Executive Committee Meeting pending small changes to be agreed by the Message Committee.

Regional Reports

40. Received the Report of WCRC Europe.
41. Received the Report of CANAAC.
42. Received the Report of AIPRAL.
43. Received the Report of ACRC.

Michigan Corporation

44. Approved the minutes of the 2022 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Corporation of WCRC, held virtually, 17-20 May 2022.

45. Agreed that all the actions of the Executive Committee during its meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, 20-24 May 2023, be fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Corporation as constituting the decisions of 2023.

NARRATIVE RECORD

SATURDAY, 20 MAY

Opening Worship

The Executive Committee convened at the Mannah Executive Guest Lodge at 16:00 for opening worship.

President Najla Kassab preached the sermon, titled “When is that day?”, asking whether we love our mission in a true spirit of hospitality. She also noted, “Covenanting for God's mission entails embracing our responsibilities to demonstrate His love through acts of kindness and compassion, and to make disciples of all nations. Covenanting involves surrendering our own will and aligning it with God's purposes.”

Plenary Session: Welcome

The President welcomed everyone in attendance, including members of the Zacchaeus Tax Campaign Relaunch, who had been meeting prior to the Executive Committee meeting. Gustav Claassen, general secretary of the Dutch Reformed Church, also welcomed all to South Africa, on behalf of the hosting churches.

The remainder of the plenary session was devoted to relaunching the ZacTax Campaign in South Africa and featured the following speakers: Suzanne Matala, Philip Vinod Peacock, Sindiso Jele, Mandla Mbongeni Hadebe, Riska Leandre Koopman, Francis Kairu, M. Ganief Hendricks, and Silje Ander.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the President noted that one of the strengths of the Communion is working with its partners.

SUNDAY, 21 MAY

Morning Worship

Attendees of the Executive Committee meeting were sent in small groups to a variety of congregations in the Johannesburg area for worship in the morning.

Plenary Session: Opening Business

The President called the meeting to order. She asked Vice-President Samuel Ayete-Nyampong to open the session with prayer, which he did.

The President asked Phil Tanis, Collegial General Secretariat (CGS) member, whether a quorum was present. He replied that it was, noting the following absences:

- Family bereavement: Sylvana Mari Apituley
- Visa issues: Mary Ekinde Salle, Uma Agwu Onwunta
- Health concerns: Heo Baekki, Claudio Pasquet
- Work conflicts: Diana Erdelyi, Hannah North, J. Herbert Nelson
- No response: Hilary Hagar

CGS Member Tanis also cited WCRC bylaw section II.B., that the president and general secretary may appoint an alternative member of the Executive if a member is unable to attend. It was announced that Michael Blair, general secretary of The United Church of Canada, would serve in such a capacity for this meeting.

The President declared a quorum present and welcomed ecumenical guests, stewards, and other visitors.

The President asked CGS Member Tanis to introduce the proposed Rules of Procedure (see page 31), which he did.

The President invited discussion. Seeing none, she entertained a motion to adopt the Rules of Procedure.

Action 1

The Executive Committee approved the Rules of Procedure for use in the Executive Committee.

The President invited Philip Vinod Peacock, CGS member, to introduce the Sexual Harassment Redress Policy, which he did. He noted that the policy had been previously adopted and was thus applied to this meeting. CGS Member Peacock also announced that Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, Lisa Vander Wal, and Muna Nassar would serve as the redressal committee.

The President asked CGS Member Tanis to introduce the Minutes of the 2022 Executive Committee meeting, which he did, noting that they had been distributed electronically to all members.

The President invited any discussion, along with a motion to approve the minutes as written.

Action 2

The Executive Committee approved the minutes of the Executive Committee 2022 as a correct record of the meeting.

Narrative

The President asked CGS Member Tanis to present the proposed discernment groups and Drafting Team, which he did.

The President asked CGS Member Muna Nassar to present the proposed Message Committee, which she did.

The President invited any discussion, along with a motion to approve the proposed groups.

Action 3

The Executive Committee appointed the following groups, team, and committee:

Discernment Group 1

Lisa Vander Wal (facilitator), Michael Blair (scribe), Tibonge Ng'ambi, Milciades Pua, Wertson Brasil, Serge Fornerod, Sindiso Jele, Salamina Tsolo

Discernment Group 2

Samuel Ayete-Nyampong (facilitator), Hefin Jones (scribe), Hong Jung Lee, Susan Thomas, Clayton Da Silva, Danisa Ndlovu, Skhumbuzo Kamogelo Nkone

Discernment Group 3

Raïssa Vieira Brasil (facilitator), Angela Martins (scribe), Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, Veronica Muchiri, Paul Tch , Athena Peralta, Mthokozisi Selby Khumalo, Bongiwe Dippa, Phil Tanis

Discernment Group 4

Johann Weusmann (facilitator), Annabell Lalla-Rankelawan (scribe), Coutinho Maravillhoso Moma, Khid-arn Prawate, John Wesley Kabango, Sue Rheem, Joseas Chokwe, Bandile Ngubane

Drafting Team: Michael Blair, Hefin Jones, Angela Martins, Annabell Lalla-Rankelawan, Hanns Lessing (staff support)

Message Committee: Veronica Muchiri (moderator), Tibonge Ng'ambi, Hong Jung Lee, Wertson Brasil, Sue Rheem, South African Church Representative, Muna Nassar (staff support), with invited advisors from the South Africa member churches.

The President invited Hanns Lessing, CGS member, to provide a re-orientation on the discernment process, which he did.

Plenary Session: Listening to Reports

The President ceded the chair to Vice-President Lisa Vander Wal.

Vice-President Vander Wal invited the President to address the Executive Committee.

The President presented her address (see page 42).

Vice-President Vander Wal invited any questions or discussion on the address and invited a motion to receive the Address of the President.

Action 4

The Executive Committee received the Address of the President.

Vice-President Vander Wal returned the chair to the President.

The President invited CGS Member Lessing to address the Executive Committee.

CGS Member Lessing presented the Report of the Collegial General Secretariat (see page 47).

The President invited any questions or discussion on the address and invited a motion to receive the report, as well as refer pertinent parts of it for further review and report.

Action 5

The Executive Committee received the Report of the Collegial General Secretariat and referred the section on the Reformed Partnership Fund to the Reformed Partnership Fund Committee for review and report, including any recommendations.

The President invited Anna Case-Winters to address the Executive Committee.

Via pre-recorded video, Anna Case-Winters, moderator of the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) presented the Report of the SPPG (see page 69).

The President invited any questions or discussion on the address and invited a motion to receive the report.

Action 6

The Executive Committee received the Report of the Strategic Plan Programme Group.

The President invited Dario Barolin to address the Executive Committee.

Via Zoom Dario Barolin, moderator of the General Council Planning Committee (GCPC), presented the GCPC Report (see page 89).

Narrative

The President invited any questions or discussion on the address and invited a motion to receive the report it and refer it to discernment groups.

Action 7

The Executive Committee received the Report of the General Council Planning Committee and referred it to discernment groups.

The President invited CGS Member Lessing to close the session in prayer, which he did.

Evening Session

After dinner, members of the Executive Committee met in discernment groups, followed by meetings of the Drafting Team and Message Committee.

MONDAY, 22 MAY

Morning Prayers

Due to the absence of Uma Agwu Onwunta, Vice-President Samuel Ayete-Nyampong led the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC)-organized opening devotions for the day. He invited the stewards to lead the Executive Committee in song before praying and sharing a reflection based on Hosea 2:18 and John 14:1: “Let your hearts not be troubled,” trust in the Lord.

Plenary Session: Decisions

The President called the meeting to order and presented a recommendation from her address for consideration.

Action 8

The Executive Committee approved that a process be put into motion to receive into the Officers’ Committee an advisor for Asia, from the Asian region and who is well versed with the life and witness of the Asian churches, who will help strengthen Communion relations with Asian members.

The President asked Angela Martins, moderator of the Drafting Team, to present their report (see page 176). Ms. Martins presented the report, with discussion and actions taken on several recommendations concerning the 2025 General Council, all of which were agreed by consensus.

Action 9

Agreed that the General Council Planning Committee should reconsider the programmatic design of General Council 2025 with the number of days that

General Council be reduced determined through a process of re-imagining what General Council could look like utilizing in-person and Zoom spaces to deliver the overall programme.

Action 10

The Executive Committee agreed that the General Council Planning Committee note the view of retaining Pre-Council caucus groups as a part of overall design. However, this comes in the context of the broader recommendation of re-imagining what General Council could look like and how these would fit into that design. Additionally, that consideration is given to assignment of space potentially for partners who may wish to “meet” within the confines of the General Council space. The process for this would have to be clearly mapped out.

Action 11

The Executive Committee agreed that the special caucus groups be made up of: women, youth, Indigenous people, and people with disabilities.

Action 12

The Executive Committee agreed that the Leadership Advisory Group be set up as detailed in the GCPC Report and that care is taken to ensure that member churches understand that the nominations process takes place at the General Council only, and that the correspondence sent to them is shared with regions.

Action 13

The Executive Committee agreed that the Public Issues Planning Group be set up to design the processes which among other things govern the setting of deadlines for submissions from member churches and other such arrangements for holding hearings and for the design of the Public Issues report.

Action 14

The Executive Committee agreed that there is a need to develop a fundraising plan which has multiple tiers and which allows member churches and individuals to see possibilities to support the General Council. This takes into consideration both large and small donation packages, but the level of detail which the plan would include should allow member churches to see what their funding support would achieve rather than simply then giving money for the General Council blindly. Accounting and communication remain as important components of this planning process.

Action 15

The Executive Committee agreed that the development of a strategic fundraising plan would have close coordination with regions and their fundraising networks and other partners. Resources as needed would be created specific to a particular region/need.

Action 16

The Executive Committee agreed that subsidized delegates would pay a registration fee of 300 euros and 700 euros as a contribution for a total of 1000 euros of their cost with the WCRC picking up the remainder, and self-supporting delegates pay a registration fee of 500 euros only.

Action 17

The Executive Committee agreed that the creation of a Just Participation Fund is seen as conceptually sound but requires its own strategic fundraising approach. It needs to be costed so that member churches or individuals can be clear how their support will support the presence of women and youth at the General Council. In this consideration the matter of support to Indigenous people and persons with disabilities is noted as being absent and should be included.

Plenary Session: Listening to Reports

The President invited Vice-President Raíssa Brasil to take the chair.

Vice-President Brasil invited Sue Rheem to present the Report of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations (see page 146). Ms. Rheem did so.

Vice-President Brasil invited questions for clarifications following the presentation. Several questions were asked and answered.

Vice-President Brasil invited a motion to receive the report.

Action 18

The Executive Committee received the Report of the Ministry to the United Nations.

Vice-President Brasil invited Serge Fornerod to present the Report on the John Knox International Center (see page 150). Mr. Fornerod did so.

Vice-President Brasil invited questions for clarifications following the presentation. Several questions were asked and answered.

Vice-President Brasil invited a motion to receive the report.

Action 19

The Executive Committee received the Report on the John Knox International Centre.

Vice-President Brasil apologized for the lack of time to receive greetings from ecumenical guests. She then passed the chair back to the President.

The President thanked everyone for their participation and work during this session.

Committee Meetings

Members of the Executive Committee met in three committees for the remainder of the morning: Constitution and Membership, Reformed Partnership Fund, and Finance.

Plenary Session: Finance

The President opened the meeting with prayer. She then invited General Treasurer Johann Weusmann to present the Finance Report (see page 74) and Audit Report (see page 190).

General Treasurer presented both reports and presented the recommendations contained in the Finance Report, endorsed by the Finance Committee.

Discussion followed with all actions taken approved by consensus.

Action 20

The Executive Committee approved the 2022 financial statement.

Action 21

The Executive Committee accepted the 2022 Audit Report.

Action 22

The Executive Committee agreed that the Acting General Secretary and General Treasurer are exonerated for the budget, economic management, and asset administration of the WCRC for the accounting year 2022.

Action 23

The Executive Committee agreed that the audit of the 2023 financial statement be carried out by the High Audit Office of the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*.

Action 24

The Executive Committee approved the 2023 provisional budget.

Action 25

The Executive Committee authorized the Officers' Committee to give preliminary approval to a balanced budget for 2024 subject to final approval at the 2024 Executive Committee meeting.

Action 26

The Executive Committee agreed that double-entry bookkeeping be implemented by budget year 2025.

The President thanked General Treasurer Weusmann and the Finance Committee for their work.

Plenary Session: Listening to Reports

The President invited Rathnakara Sadananda to present the report of The Committee via Zoom. Mr. Sadanada attempted to do so but connectivity issues prevented him from doing so. The President invited Vice-President Vander Wal to read the presentation, which she did.

The President asked for any questions for clarification and then invited a motion to accept the report and refer it to discernment groups.

Action 27

The Executive Committee received the report of The Committee and referred it to discernment groups.

The President invited Veronica Muchiri to present the Report of the Constitution and Membership Committee (see page 173), which she did.

The President asked for any questions for clarification and then invited a motion to accept the report and refer it to discernment groups.

Action 28

The Executive Committee received the Report of the Constitution and Membership Committee and referred it to discernment groups.

The President invited Raíssa Brasil to present the Report of the Reformed Partnership Fund Committee (see page 175), which she did.

The President asked for any questions for clarification and then invited a motion to accept the report and refer it to discernment groups.

Action 29

The Executive Committee received the Report of the Reformed Partnership Fund Committee and referred it to discernment groups.

The President asked Gustav Claassen to close the session in prayer, which he did.

Discernment Groups

The Executive Committee met in discernment groups for the remainder of the afternoon.

Plenary Session: South Africa Members

The President called the meeting to order and invited CGS Member Lessing to introduce the evening session, which he did.

The following leaders from WCRC member denominations in Southern Africa presented overviews of their churches and the issues they were currently addressing:

- Dutch Reformed Church: Gustav Claassen
- Lesotho Evangelical Church in Southern Africa: Mojaki Kometsi
- Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika: Wim Dreyer
- Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa: Leepo Modise
- Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa: Lungile Mpetsheni

TUESDAY, 23 MAY

Morning Prayers

Angela Martins, convenor of the CANAAC Steering Committee, led a service of prayer and worship with contributions from all other CANAAC members in attendance. Michael Blair led a reflection on the theme “Covenanting in God’s Mission,” based on John 17:20-23.

Plenary Session: Leadership Structure

The President asked Angela Martins, moderator of the Drafting Team, to present their report (see page 181). Ms. Martins reported that the various discernment groups did not come to a general consensus on the matter of staff leadership, specifically that of the Collegial General Secretariat and/or an Acting General Secretary. It was thus recommended that the Executive Committee enter into a closed session to continue the discussion collectively.

After some discussion it was agreed that the Executive Committee would move into a closed session with Executive Committee Member Hefin Jones tasked to take notes.

Plenary Session: Decisions

Upon the re-opening of the meeting, the President noted that the decision reached would be finalized over night and presented to the Executive Committee meeting

tomorrow. She then asked Angela Martins to continue with the report of the Drafting Team, which she did, beginning with a proposal to develop a fundraising strategy. After discussion, the proposed recommendation was adopted by consensus.

Action 30

The Executive Committee agreed that a fundraising strategy be developed for the WCRC which would include the following:

- a. **Clear responsibilities of both the global (including the Executive Committee) and regional bodies to guide cooperative work to strengthen the Communion in this area.**
- b. **Keeping in mind the diversity of the Communion, customized approaches either regionally or nationally to best engage with regions, members, congregations, and individuals**
- c. **Fundraising materials, including brochures, videos, etc., along with the use of current technologies and media.**
- d. **Communion-wide fundraising efforts, such as the annual appeal and the developing Reformation/WCRC Sunday, both of which should not only be continued but also expanded.**

The Drafting Team next proposed the following recommendation:

That priority focus be given to appointing an Executive Secretary experienced in Communications. Recognizing the importance of a handover from the outgoing Executive Secretary for Communications, it is also recommended that planning for the recruitment process gets underway in a timely manner. To support the matter of fundraising, it is recommended that there is a refocus of the staffing arrangements allowing for assignment of fundraising to one of them.

After concerns were raised about committing sufficient funding for another executive secretary's term, the following was adopted by consensus:

Action 31

The Executive Committee authorized the Officers' Committee to bring a proposal to an extraordinary virtual Executive Committee meeting to ensure communications continues upon the completion of the current communication executive's term in 2024.

The next several recommendations from the Drafting Team report focused on membership matters. All were agreed by consensus.

Action 32

The Executive Committee directed the Constitution and Membership Committee to review all categories of membership in the constitution and bylaws to allow a greater diversity of levels of engagement, including how membership within the

regional councils functions and to ensure that there is clarity in affiliate and associate memberships.

Action 33

The Executive Committee asked the Constitution and Membership Committee to 1) review the current levels of membership dues, 2) consider ways in which these dues can be “paid” (e.g., through in-kind donations), 3) conduct a “sustainability audit” of the Communion, the resources available, in the Communion and the possibilities that open or limitation that impose. All donations should be properly acknowledged and in-kind gifts should be given a value.

It was noted that the third point above would have to be conducted in coordination and with the support of the global office.

Action 34

The Executive Committee asked that, in an aligned arrangement with the global office, members of the Executive Committee contact the heads of member churches in their regions, reaching out to nurture relations and facilitate their participation in the work of the WCRC.

The three proposed amendments to the WCRC constitution were brought in two recommendations, both agreed by consensus.

Action 35

The Executive Committee proposed an amendment to the WCRC Constitution as follows: When the position of General Secretary becomes vacant due to exigent or emergency situation, the Officers of the WCRC are empowered to appoint an Acting General Secretary until such time as the Executive Committee can be convened to determine the way forward.

Action 36

The Executive Committee referred the other two proposed amendments to the Constitution and Membership Committee for further review, including possible incorporation into the bylaws.

Finally, a recommendation on the Reformed Partnership Fund was discussed and then agreed by consensus.

Action 37

The Executive Committee agreed that in light of the fact that the Reformed Partnership Fund has been able to make significant contributions to member churches in the past the Committee be encouraged to look for new sources of funding going forward, with regions involved in supporting the fund.

The President thanked Angela Martins and the Drafting Team for their good work. She then noted that the regional reports would be presented tomorrow and that Executive Committee members should familiarize themselves with them if they had not already done so.

The President asked Clayton Da Silva Leal to close the session with prayer, which he did.

Immersion

The Executive Committee visited Constitution Hill in the afternoon, learning about both apartheid-era prisons and the country's current commitment to equality under the law.

The evening was filled with a braai, musical performances by two groups, and a lecture on the socio-political situation in South Africa by Professor Lucky Mathebula.

WEDNESDAY, 24 MAY

Morning Prayers

Wertson Brasil, president of AIPRAL, led a service of prayer and worship with contributions from all other AIPRAL members in attendance. The reflection was based on Luke 6:6-11 and asked "Who are the marginalized in our region?"

Plenary Session: Leadership and Message

The President asked Hefin Jones to report on the final language of the recommendation on the leadership structure for the WCRC, which he did. The proposal was adopted by consensus.

Action 38

The Executive Committee agreed that:

- 1. The CGS model is to be discontinued upon the appointment of an Acting General Secretary.**
- 2. The process to elect an Acting General Secretary, who will serve through the 2025 General Council will be as follows:**
 - a) The Officers will name a special committee to recommend through interview a candidate as Acting General Secretary.**
 - b) At the same time, interviews will be held of the four Executive Secretaries who currently compose the CGS and veteran church leaders with full**

familiarity with the work of WCRC and with proven success in leading organizations, raising funds, and supervising a multicultural team.

- c) Once a candidate is selected for recommendation, the WCRC Executive Committee will meet in a virtual extraordinary session to vote on the nominee.**

The President asked Veronica Muchiri, moderator of the Message Committee, to present the draft message, which she did.

The President asked for discussion. Several suggestions were offered. The President entertained a motion to approve the message pending these changes. This was agreed by consensus.

Action 39

The Executive Committee approved the Message from the 2023 Executive Committee Meeting pending small changes to be agreed by the Message Committee.

Plenary Session: Report from Regions

The President asked Vice-President Samuel Ayete-Nyampong to assume the chair.

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong invited Martina Wasserloos-Strunk to present the report of WCRC Europe (see page 141), which she did.

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong invited any discussion, as well as motion to receive the report.

Action 40

The Executive Committee received the Report of WCRC Europe.

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong invited Angela Martins to present the report of CANAAC (see page 134), which she did.

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong invited any discussion, as well as motion to receive the report.

Action 41

The Executive Committee received the Report of CANAAC.

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong invited Wertson Brasil to present the report of AIPRAL (see page 125), which he did.

Narrative

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong invited any discussion, as well as motion to receive the report.

Action 42

The Executive Committee received the Report of AIPRAL.

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong invited Lungile Mpetsheni to present the report of ACRC (see page 121), which he did.

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong invited any discussion, as well as motion to receive the report.

Action 43

The Executive Committee received the Report of ACRC.

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong noted that NEAAC had not submitted a report. Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong returned the chair to the President.

Plenary Session: Ecumenical Greetings

The President invited the following ecumenical representations to present greetings to the Executive Committee (see page 159), which they did.

- Paul Tche, Disciples of Christ World Communion
- Martin Pühn, Evangelical Church in Germany
- Danisa Ndlovu, Mennonite World Conference
- John Wesley Kabango, United Evangelical Mission

The President thanked all of the ecumenical guests and noted that additional written greetings had been received and shared with the Executive Committee members.

Plenary Session: GRAPE Presentation

The President invited Muna Nassar, CGS member and executive secretary for mission and advocacy, to introduce the GRAPE (Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement) project, which she did. Participants in the two GRAPE pilot projects presented their work: Bukelwa Hans and Vuyisiwe Mahafu from South Africa and William Kiptoo and Esther Gitau from Kenya, along with consultants Claudia and Dirk Haarmann.

The President invited questions and comments. Several Executive Committee members engaged with the GRAPE participants. The President thanked all those who had presented for their excellent work.

The President closed the 2023 meeting of the WCRC Executive Committee.

Plenary Session: Michigan Corporation

The President called the meeting of the WCRC Michigan Corporation to order. She asked Hanns Lessing to open the meeting in prayer, which he did.

The President asked Phil Tanis to provide an overview of the recommendations before the body and asked if a quorum was present. CGS Member Tanis noted that a quorum was present and invited discussion and action on the following two motions, both of which were agreed by consensus:

Action 44

The Executive Committee approved the minutes of the 2022 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Corporation of WCRC, held virtually, 17-20 May 2022.

Action 45

The Executive Committee agreed that all the actions of the Executive Committee during its meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, 20-24 May 2023, be fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Corporation as constituting the decisions of 2023.

The President asked Phil Tanis to close the meeting in prayer, which he did.

Plenary: Thanks

At the conclusion of the meetings, the President offered words of thanks to the South African host churches and invited the leaders present to say a few words. The following leaders from the South African churches in turn thanked the WCRC for holding their Executive Committee meeting in South Africa and presented gifts to the officers:

- Wouter Van Wyk
- Leepo Modise
- Lungile Mpetsheni
- Gustav Claassen

Closing Worship

The Executive Committee joined in a closing worship service led by members present from WCRC Europe, a message brought by Hanns Lessing, and participation in the Lord's Supper.

Rules of Procedure for the Executive Committee Guidelines for Discernment Procedures

Background

The 2017 General Council successfully utilized a discernment/consensus model of decision-making, allowing more voices to be heard throughout the entirety of the process and coming together on decisions through consensus. Voices from the participants emphasize the strengths of this process:

“Discernment truly is more about listening than speaking. It is important to listen to what others are saying. It is important to listen to what God is saying. And it’s important to consider your own thoughts with regard to the issue and in light of what you have heard.”

“Church decision-making should look like church, not politics. And the process should make community, not fracture it.”

“Consensus-building does not solve every issue. But the important thing is that we all journey in the same direction. And that we journey together.”

I. DISCERNMENT AND THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

1. Theological Basis

At the heart of discernment procedures is a commitment to worship, work, listen and pray together as a community of faith, seeking to discern God’s will for the way forward on issues under consideration.

As the Body of Christ, the church is always searching for the mind of Christ, seeking to “understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17). Our common commitment to seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our deliberations is confirmed by the experience of the fruit of the Spirit amongst us as we work: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22).

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is intentionally a communion built around a common table for both worship and decision making. The table symbolizes the centrality of Christ and our mutual dependence on the Holy Spirit for our life together. We sit equally before God as sisters and brothers.

The WCRC is a communion that is committed to justice. It is therefore imperative that in its shared life together it operates in a way that fosters communion among its

members and which allows them to live justly in relation to one another. All conversations should be edifying and all efforts build *koinonia*.

Our developing *koinonia*, our intentional spiritual fellowship, is dedicated to the prophetic calling to bring God’s justice like a mighty river and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream to a world thirsty for hope and the grace of the Gospel.

Discernment means a prayerful process that builds community and by which a common mind of the Executive Committee is sought concerning the wisest way forward on a particular issue at that time.

There are no winners and losers—we are all seekers and discerners together, affirming through our common loyalty to Jesus Christ that:

- the Executive Committee is a community of faith earnestly seeking to understand God’s will;
- each member of the Executive Committee has been given unique gifts and insights by God;
- everyone’s contribution is worthy of respect;
- our aim is to discern what the Spirit is saying to the organization through the Executive Committee;
- our commitment is to find faithful ways forward on which all can agree.

Adopting these Rules of Procedure, business processes and techniques ensures that the Executive Committee of the WCRC will:

- foster deep **listening** and respect;
- make space for the influence of the Holy Spirit and different perspectives through **dialogue** and **discernment**;
- take the time to **build consensus** in decision making.

2. Building Community

The Executive Committee draws together people from different countries, cultures and traditions. It takes time to build the trust and relationships that form a community of faith. This is why significant time will be spent in worship and community building.

As we acknowledge the Lordship of Christ and listen for the Word of God in worship together the bonds of community are strengthened. Our diversity and unity in Jesus Christ is also celebrated informally as we live, work and pray together.

II. RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

1. Definitions

Committee means a group appointed by the Executive Committee to bring reports and proposals on particular business through the general secretariat. The first three of the following committees are in existence while the fourth is proposed to be constituted:

- Finance Committee
- Membership and Constitution Committee
- Reformed Partnership Fund Committee
- Message Committee (to report directly to the Executive Committee in the context of the meeting)

Discernment Group means a small group of Executive Committee members (with guests and observers brought together in their own discernment group(s)). Discernment Groups are composed according to the values of empowerment and diversity: Each member shall be given the chance to fully contribute to the discussion in dialogue with voices expressing themselves from different perspectives (see part 10 of these rules).

Discernment Procedures Consultant is the person(s) assisting with the use of discernment procedures (see part 6 of these rules).

Drafting Team means the committee of the Scribes of the Discernment Groups that amend the proposals coming from the Discernment Groups in the light of the discussions in the groups (see part 10 of these rules).

Facilitator means the person who facilitates the work of a Discernment Group. The main task of the facilitator is to ensure that all delegates can fully participate in the discussion (see part 10 of these rules).

Participants

- *Members* of the Executive Committee have full vote and voice throughout the meeting.
- *Guests* are those individuals who have been invited to attend the Executive Committee meeting. Guests have the right to speak but may not vote.
- *Observers* are representatives from member churches or other communions who are considering becoming members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Observers may participate in the activities of the Executive Committee, but do not have the right to voice or vote.
- *Consultants* may be present at the Executive Committee meeting upon invitation by the officers. A consultant may be asked to address the Executive Committee on the issue for which the consultant is present. A consultant's right to speak is limited to that specific matter, and the consultant may not vote.

- *Visitors* are those individuals who attend the public sessions of the Executive Committee for personal reasons. Visitors do not have the right to speak, make motions or vote.
- *Officers* are the following elected officials of the WCRC: president, vice-presidents, members of the collegial general secretariat, and general treasurer. The members of the collegial general secretariat by virtue of their office, have the right to speak but may not vote.
- *Staff* of the WCRC may act as resources in the work of the Executive Committee. When requested by the chair, they have voice but they may not vote.

Scribe means a person appointed to be the secretary of a Discernment Group and to convey its findings to the Drafting Team. At the end of each session the Discernment Group determines which points should be brought to the Drafting Team (see part 10 of these rules).

2. Role of the Officers Group

The Officers Group shall oversee the business coming to the Executive Committee and set its proposed agenda, taking on any of the following tasks as necessary:

- initiate proposals on any matter relating to the efficient working of the Executive Committee;
- consider how matters may best be grouped for consideration, so none is disadvantaged;
- ensure that the Executive Committee is resourced with information from a range of perspectives about each matter, so that an informed way forward may be discerned;
- review the agenda regularly, prioritizing items needing deeper deliberation and more time;
- alter the agenda as needed.

3. Matters for Consideration

Matters for consideration shall be presented through the address of the president, the report of the general secretary or other means as decided upon by the officers and ratified by the Executive Committee when approving the agenda of the meeting.

4. Interpretation

The Executive Committee conducts its work in English. If a member of the Executive Committee needs translation, that request must come with sufficient notice to obtain translators.

5. Moderator

The officers of the WCRC (president or one of the vice-presidents) shall be Moderator of the plenary sessions of the Executive Committee.

The role of the Moderator is to preside in a manner which assists the Executive Committee in seeking to understand the will of God as far as possible and which meets the needs and purposes of the Executive Committee and its participants.

In so doing, the Moderator:

- ensures that the Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Business are observed;
- watches with the participants for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and for the wisdom of Scripture throughout all contributions;
- is prepared to pause for prayer or silent reflection as appropriate;
- may invite participants to turn to others nearby for small group discussion or prayer;
- encourages trust and integrity in contributions;
- ensures care and support for those whose honesty may leave them vulnerable;
- invites members to indicate their response to speeches and reflects that mood back to the Executive Committee as it becomes apparent;
- looks for creative modifications of a proposal, incorporating insights expressed by speakers;
- summarizes discussion from time to time to assist in focusing the direction;
- does not participate in discussion (if a Moderator wishes to speak to an issue someone else will act as Moderator during consideration of that particular issue until it is resolved);
- acknowledges those who wish to speak during the meeting. Speakers should address the Executive Committee through the Moderator;
- ensures that different voices are included during plenary sessions.

Participants will respect requests or directions from the Moderator. Out of respect for the office of Moderator, when she or he speaks, all remain silent so the Moderator is heard without interruption.

6. Discernment Procedures Consultant

If desired, a Discernment Procedures consultant may be present to assist with resourcing the Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Business.

The responsibilities of the Discernment Procedures Consultant are:

- to be resources for the Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Business and the discernment principles on which they are based;

- to clarify any uncertainties about procedures in plenary sessions if called upon by the Moderator or the General Secretary;
- to be available to support the Moderator and General Secretary in chairing each session;
- to be available to assist the Moderator in ensuring that all insights are considered as the Executive Committee seeks to discern a way forward for any issue;
- to attend officers meetings to advise on procedures as necessary;
- to advise participants about procedures as necessary.

7. Use of Discernment Procedures

The Executive Committee will use the discernment process to make all decisions except for: approval or changes in procedures, elections and constitutional and bylaws changes. If a resubmitted matter does not receive approval through the discernment process, and the Executive Committee takes the view that a decision must be made on this item of business at this meeting of the Executive Committee then a vote will be taken.

8. Building Blocks of the Discernment Process

The basic building blocks of the discernment process are:

- Introduce and clarify the issue (listening sessions)
- Explore the issue and look for ideas (Discernment Groups)
- Look for emerging proposals (decision sessions)
- Discuss, clarify and offer proposals (decision sessions)
- Test for agreement (decision sessions)
- Implement the decision (staff)

9. Listening Sessions to Introduce and Clarify the Issue

The Executive Committee must be fully resourced with information about an issue, proposal or report. Seeking to discern God's will for a faithful response presumes participants hold a clear understanding of the rationale and theological basis for possible ways forward.

Listening sessions shall be prepared in conjunction with the officers group.

During the listening sessions the reports and matters are received. A number of speakers may be invited to present varying aspects of a particular issue before clarification questions and discussion.

Reception of a report means agreement to consider the substance of a report. This is approved in the listening sessions after the report is presented and any clarifying questions are answered. Reception means that the proposals in the report are now before the Executive Committee for consideration. A report as a whole must be adopted if its substance is to become policy, or specific proposals arising from a report must be considered before agreement to act can be assumed.

At the end of each listening session draft proposals to be discussed by the Discernment Groups shall be introduced.

10. Discernment Groups to Look for Emerging Consensus

Composition of Discernment Groups

The Discernment Groups will formally be appointed by the president and approved by the Executive Committee. Factors that need to be included (and sometimes weighed against each other) when composing the Discernment Groups:

1. **Diversity:** Groups should not be geographically driven. It is important not to have a group composed solely from a single country or region.
2. **Balances:** Besides geographic diversity, each group should be balanced between gender, age, ordained/non-ordained and abilities.
3. **Communication:** All members of a group must be able to communicate effectively with one another. Those Executive Committee members who do not speak fluent English will be grouped with those of like language abilities.

Another critical aspect of each group's composition is the *leadership*. Each group needs at least two leaders: one to *facilitate* the group and another one to act as *Scribe*, not only recording the decisions of the group but also taking those decisions to the Drafting Team. The *Facilitator* will need to be able to facilitate a process that respects all members' voices while striving at reaching consensus on the issues within the time allotted.

Process in Discernment Groups

The introductory session of the Discernment Group will introduce the discernment process to the group and set the "norms" (rules, guidelines, etc.) of how the group will operate. Setting the norms also gives the members a first experience of the discernment process and can be used by the leadership to accommodate differing cultural needs, fix any glitches in the system (especially translation), etc. While structured to produce constructive results that will move the process to the Drafting

Team, the discernment process is geared to hear all voices and invite the movement of the Holy Spirit into all groups.

The Discernment Groups are guided by materials they receive; they discuss and amend the proposals that were introduced during the listening session. Decisions within each group should be made through consensus. If consensus cannot be reached the group defines the point of disagreement and requests the Scribe to take the different opinions to the Drafting Team.

The discernment process during the Executive Committee is value driven and should respect each individual and her/his voice even as the process unites the delegates through discussion and consensus. No member should be marginalized based on any factor: “The World Communion of Reformed Churches in its order and actions is called to respect, defend, and advance the dignity of every person. In Jesus Christ all human differences must lose their power to divide. No one shall be disadvantaged for, among other reasons, race, ethnicity, or gender, and no individual or church may claim or exercise dominance over another” (WCRC Constitution, Article III, Section B).

At the end of each Discernment Group session, the Scribes will gather to distil the variety of material produced into a report with specific recommendations. The processes used in the Drafting Team to create the report will also be by consensus and use norms as determined by the group.

11. Decision Sessions to Discuss, Clarify and Test for Agreement

The final reports of the Drafting Team will be brought to the plenary. The reports should be presented by at least two Scribes, selected by the Drafting Team. Delegates will hear the voice of their Discernment Group in the report and its recommendations, changing the tenor of the discussion positively. The plenary will then discuss and come to consensus on the reports and recommendations.

Procedures in Decision Sessions

Orange and blue indicator cards are provided for voting members. At the end of each speech, voting delegates may choose to indicate their response to the content of the speech, by showing their orange or blue card. The cards provide a quick and visible indication of the mood of the Executive Committee.¹

- Showing an orange card indicates warmth and appreciation towards a point of view.
- Showing a blue card indicates coolness and hesitation towards a point of view, or that more discussion is needed.

¹ Orange and blue are used because they can be clearly distinguished even by people who are colour-blind.

Cards may also be used to indicate to the Moderator that it is time to move on; a speaker may be getting repetitious, or the points may have been well made already. In this case, a member can hold the two indicator cards crossed in front of her/his chest, as a silent indication that pursuing debate is not likely to be helpful.

The Moderator alerts the Executive Committee to the strength of feeling expressed through the indicator cards as appropriate. The members may express their thoughts and offer proposals.

Possible outcomes of discernment process:

- All in agreement (unanimous);
- Most are in agreement (minority give consent to move forward);
- Consideration on matter postponed;
- Agree no decision can be reached;
- Refer an issue to another body, either to bring advice to the Executive Committee on how to proceed or to determine the referred issue on behalf of the Executive Committee;
- Issue brought to a vote, if this is agreed by a two-thirds majority of voting delegates present (see below).

The Moderator may determine that a proposal be referred to a small group of participants nominated by the Moderator, with a view to the small group bringing an amended proposal likely to receive greater support. The matter is resubmitted to the Executive Committee for decision when the Officers Group determines.

In the event that:

- the resubmitted matter does not receive support, and
- if the Officers group takes the view that a decision must be made on this item of business at this meeting of the Executive Committee,
- then the Executive Committee may determine that a two thirds majority of delegates present and voting is sufficient to determine this item of business.

12. When Voting is Required

Only voting members may vote. The Moderator declares the method of voting (show of hands, standing, written ballot, etc).

A majority of members present and voting is required for approval of the proposal.

After the vote, the Moderator declares the proposal approved or not approved.

All participants are encouraged to return to their churches advocating the decisions

of the Executive Committee, even if they would have preferred different outcomes. It is the responsibility of those privileged to participate to explain to those who were not present why particular decisions were taken.

13. Recording Dissension

The basis of discernment procedures is that the community of faith listens, prays, discusses and works together towards discerning God's will for a faithful response. Resolutions are made in that light.

Voting members may record their dissent or abstention on any particular resolution by lodging it in writing with the recording secretary or executive secretary for communications before the next session commences.

14. Procedural Proposals

Procedural proposals may be raised by delegates (not by other participants) and relate to how or when the Executive Committee deals with a particular agenda item. When making a procedural proposal a member may not interrupt a speaker but seeks recognition from the Moderator to speak. Procedural proposals must be seconded, may be debated and are determined by discernment procedures or a simple majority vote (50 percent plus one of those present).

Procedural proposals include:

- *Fixed order*: proposes that the Executive Committee deals with business previously set for that time. It may be linked to a procedural proposal for the adjournment of the current discussion.
- *Adjournment*: may be proposed by a member who has not spoken in the current discussion. If approved, any person whose speech was interrupted may speak first when discussion resumes.
- *Closed Session*: all who are not members leave the session while the Executive Committee considers an issue in private. If approved, it requires a subsequent procedural proposal ("that the Executive Committee cease sitting in closed session") to return to an open plenary session.
- *Closure of the debate*: may be proposed ("that the vote be now taken") by a member who has not spoken in the current discussion. The Moderator may also propose closure.

15. Points of Concern

"...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control..." (Galatians 5:22-23).

The Executive Committee will engage in its business and corporate life in a way that ensures that the fruits of the Spirit are supported and expressed:

- prayerful listening respect for all participants;
- compassion with one another;
- trust;
- encouraging shared goals;
- exhibiting an openness/vulnerability to one another.

A member may raise a concern at any time by gaining the attention of the Moderator and stating, "I have a point of concern." The Moderator asks the delegate to state the concern.

Concerns that may be raised are:

- A speaker is thought to be digressing from the matter under discussion.
- A member may claim the right to make personal explanation if a subsequent speaker grossly misrepresents her/his remarks.
- A member may raise objection if remarks are thought to be offensive or derogatory.

The Moderator may without debate:

- rule on it immediately;
- ask advice from selected participants and then rule on the point;
- ask the Executive Committee to decide the matter by discussion and discernment.

If the Moderator's ruling on a point of concern is challenged, the challenging delegate may speak, and the Moderator may reply before putting it to a vote to sustain or disallow the ruling, without further discussion. The decision is resolved by simple majority.

16. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Business

The Executive Committee in its first business session determines by simple majority vote whether to adopt or modify these Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Business. During the course of the meeting, suspension or amendment of all or part of the procedures may be agreed by discernment procedures or a two-thirds majority of delegates present and voting.

Address of the President

from Najla Kassab

I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground, and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety (Hosea 2:18).

We thank God for the opportunity to meet again in person for the first time since 2019, after four years of separation due to the COVID pandemic and the distancing that pushed us to a new reality, impacted the lives of our churches, and posed new questions and concerns. The COVID pandemic changed individuals, institutions, and churches. Although the pandemic is weaker today, we are still trying to handle its aftermath. We are left with many concerns about how to retain our strength and function with integrity. This pandemic created fear, fragmentation, fragility, and insecurity about the future.

We meet today as suffering and injustice prevail around the world, and peace initiatives do not succeed. The situation in the Middle East remains critical, especially after the escalation between Israeli forces and militants in the Gaza Strip, the war in Sudan, violence in Pakistan and Haiti, and the continued struggle for peace in the Korean Peninsula. Or the continual threat to Taiwan and many other troubled areas that leads to more injustice and indignity for the people. We observe today that new allies and powers are coming together for political and economic agendas. The world is in a waiting mood to see how the new order will affect simple countries.

Just after believing that wars were restricted to some areas of the world, we were surprised by the war in Ukraine that has affected Europe and the world. The war in Ukraine has led to more refugees, and just as we were striving to face the issues of refugees around the world, we have new floods of refugees from Europe and in Europe. The injustice of war has kept into many lives and families, and the fear in the eyes of the children that we have seen for so long in the eyes of children in the Middle East, Sudan, and Korea has affected the children of Ukraine. The difficulty is that no one knows how long that could be, but more death, pain, and injustice are affecting the people, and in the end, simple people are the ones who pay the price.

Besides war, economic injustice is another tough reality that the world is facing today. Poverty and inequality are serious concerns that threaten several countries around the world. The fuel issue pushed many to a new lifestyle, and people are concerned about tomorrow. Not to forget climate change and the impact that it has on the daily lives of many and threatens their well-being.

We meet today under the theme, "Covenanting in God's Mission" based on Hosea 2:18: *"I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of*

the air, and the creeping things of the ground, and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety."

The theme that we gather around is a theme that speaks about a covenant that God has made with his people, and it is encouraging to see that the covenant with God is spelled out clearly in the lives of the people here on earth. It speaks about change where the bow, the sword, and war will be stopped, where safety is lived, and God's promise is that tomorrow we will have a better stand.

The text speaks about commitment, not for a short time but rather a commitment that God, who covenanted with his people, promises us a better tomorrow and will bring safety, justice, and shalom for all. This encourages us to be in covenant with all who are suffering, face poverty, and struggle to live with dignity. It is easy to stand with people for a short time, but to be committed to their struggle and be in covenant with them, is a different story. To journey with them till dignity for all is lived. As a communion, we have committed ourselves to covenant with all who face injustice, and I believe in this spirit of covenanting. We meet in South Africa as we affirm that we come back to hold our Executive Committee meeting, to check on issues of injustice that the people and the Church continue to face, and say that we will be in covenant with you till the dignity for all is lived. For the well-being of the people, shalom is a lived reality.

The theme shows spirituality that works toward fulfilling change, where our commitments move us to action. Unless our spirituality meets the struggle of the people in their daily lives, in their pain, we become a poetic communion where we talk and express ourselves in nice words, but we do not help people move towards lived justice. This is why worship and justice are inherently combined and help us see that the purpose of elevating God, manifested through worship, praise, and reverent prayer, is to ultimately elevate the commandments of God, which will shape every area of life.

In the prophets' worldview, to worship the God of Israel is to worship the God who rescued poor slaves out of Egypt, brought them out of their misery, and gave them abundance. If we worship a God whose fundamental nature is to pay attention to the poor and oppressed, then that's the kind of society that will result—a society that reflects a God who takes care of the poor. On the flip side, if we turn our backs on that kind of God, then the poor will be abused and neglected.

Then to be in covenant with the poor is to combine mission and advocacy together as central to our commitment on our journey towards justice, and we place justice for the vulnerable, dispossessed, and excluded at the center of our work, as the Accra Confession calls us in Article 19 in an invitation "to covenant with people and the earth for peace and security" (Hosea 2:18).

Today, we are challenged by the youth in our churches, to be relevant to their struggles and concerns. Despite their faith commitment, they question what the church is providing to them in their daily struggle. Being the church in the public sphere is a challenge that we are called to face. Focusing on advocacy work is one step forward in stepping into the public sphere with integrity in how we understand our identity; how we live our faith; and how we can be an impactful communion that trusts God, who could use us for the good of all, including nature and all creation.

We meet today to celebrate God's goodness as we survived the continuous challenges that COVID posed to us. Being a Communion where people could not meet and no one could travel was a great risk for the life of the communion. When communion is about coming together, the COVID pandemic was a force of separation and discouragement for many.

The financial challenges that the churches faced due to COVID have impacted the financial status of the Communion in terms of contributions to the core budget that supports salaries for staff. This led to the Communion's inability to provide the needed salary for a general secretary.

We thank God for the faithful staff who did all they could to keep the Communion functioning and worked as the Collegial General Secretariat, taking on the responsibility of the general secretary. This model of leadership has helped the Communion face the challenge of leading the Communion in the absence of a general secretary, empowered the program work at the Communion, and created a collegial spirit of sharing responsibilities. Still, this model has been an arrangement to meet the arising situation, and the Communion is in the process of discerning how to move forward and how to meet the post-COVID time. "The Committee" has done valued work in dealing with key issues in the life of the Communion, including evaluating the leadership model that will help us discern how we will move forward in leading the Communion to the 2025 General Council.

Despite all the challenges faced, we see that the Communion is alive in its programs, where there is great cooperation with other partners and valued financial commitment for the program work. This reflects the trust that we have built regarding handling the program's work. These efforts did bear fruit in having two new positions in the global office, led by two women: an Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy and a Program Coordinator for Gender Justice. Also, a third new staff person will be stationed in Rome in the Reformed Eccumenical Office to enhance ecumenical work. All these developments were supported by partners, and we hope that this will strengthen and deepen our justice work.

Financial stability remains a main concern that we need to pay attention to. Before COVID, the contribution of member churches started to improve, and moving towards "just" contributions from different churches and regions showed a healthy

development. But during COVID time, churches faced financial challenges that affected their contribution to the core budget, which provides salaries for staff. The financial commitment of member churches is essential to securing the work of the Communion. The number of staff is already limited when compared to the amount of work and programs. Thus, as Executive Committee members, we are challenged to rekindle the spirit of "financial responsibility and commitment" of our churches towards the Communion. "Paying membership fees is a strong statement of belonging to and empowerment for the Communion." It is a covenant relationship in the good and difficult times that we claimed when we joined the Communion. I know that holding the Executive Committee in person has been a strong challenge to continue the journey of our work as an Executive Committee, and we appreciate all those who tried to secure the cost of their travel, besides the hosting church in South Africa, in order to secure a healthy communion. It is an important time that Executive members of the WCRC have an important role in encouraging churches in their regions to express their belonging to the Communion through their financial contribution. If we need to secure the future of our work, we need to have the right human capacity needed in order to have fruitful and organized work. Our staff now have around 150 percent load, and this is an unjust situation for them and all those who serve our communion.

The relationship between the global office and the regions is key to a healthy Communion. As a Communion, we are blessed and enriched by the ministry and witness of the churches in the regions. We are a Communion that is rich with great human resources in the regions. To encourage the work in the regions is at the heart of a strong Communion. The strength of the Communion is not centered in the global office, despite the capable staff who are fully committed to the work of the Communion; still, empowering the work in the regions goes side by side with the work on the global level of the Communion. Cooperation between the global and regional levels is growing stronger, but we are challenged to have a regular rhythm of meetings to create better harmony and hold each other accountable for sharing our human and financial resources for the well-being of the Communion. We are now in the process of preparing for the General Council, and we hope that this will be a time of walking closely with the regions to secure all resources needed to have a successful assembly. Our commitment to the Communion urges us to share all that God has provided to us in service of ministry, justice, and a better world. In this spirit, we come together to share our gifts and blessings of God with all.

Leading the Communion together: We meet today as a committee that leads the work of the Communion after we have passed a crisis. I believe our understanding of our leadership is key to a better tomorrow as a Communion. Crisis brings leadership attributes, and I am happy to share one quote about leadership that says, "Leaders absorb chaos, radiate calm, and inspire hope." The author is unknown, but it describes the trait of leader behavior during times of crisis. The COVID crisis is one that has impacted us all. We are called to be courageous leaders who provide hope

to one another and try together to openly inspire hope. As the CGS uses the term "the communion is alive," it is alive because we could come together, we could pass the more difficult days, but because we trust that this is a *kairos* time; God's time where God could use us.

Lately, I was introduced to Kintsugi, an ancient Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by bonding areas of breakage with lacquer mixed with gold, silver, or platinum powder. The philosophy of this art is that breakage and repair are seen as part of history and not as defects that should be hidden. The art focuses on brokenness and beautifies it, giving it a new look that is even more beautiful than before. As a Communion, we have been through brokenness, but the Lord provided the strength to come together in a new pottery that is even stronger and more beautiful. Today we meet in South Africa, where brokenness stories have affected many on the streets of this country, but this is a place that assures that pain will not have the last word. God is still at work. The pottery is in a shaping process where we learn not to hide the brokenness but are moved to a different experience and level.

I know the cross in the middle of our faith is like the kintsugi art where pain and brokenness are part of our history but do not have the last word; the resurrection changes our pain and moves us to a different reality with a new pottery in the midst of brokenness.

Brokenness will not have the last word; our challenges will direct us to a better reality that is even more beautiful. We will not hide the pain but rather work together to create a new reality. This new reality is made real by the work of the Communion on the local and global levels. How can we work together in a trusting relationship that will allow us to be enriched and live in a communal spirit that inspires hope?

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank the officers, especially those who were committed to the difficult journey and did not give up but held firm to the covenant. They are committed to the Communion and have not given up but have been and continue to be ready to meet at any time to work for the Communion. I would like to thank the CGS and the staff who worked full heartedly to secure continuity in moving forward as a communion.

I would like to close with these words from the scriptures:

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our bodies (2 Corinthians 4:8–10).

Report of the Collegial General Secretariat: “Covenanting in God’s Mission”

from Hanns Lessing, Muna Nassar, Philip Vinod Peacock, Phil Tanis

Meeting in South Africa

Today, the Executive Committee meets in Johannesburg. For the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), this is not an ordinary location. It was the engagement with the South African churches during the time of apartheid that shaped the self-understanding of the WCRC as we know it today. The apartheid challenged the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to strengthen its commitment to justice and transformed us from a confessional into a confessing communion. It is no overstatement when we say that the faith response to the apartheid system gave the World Alliance of Reformed Churches a true church identity. When the 1982 General Council in Ottawa, Canada, declared a *status confessionis* that rejected apartheid as a sin and its theological justification as a heresy, the World Alliance began to speak with divine authority. Declaring a *status confessionis* is much more than stating an opinion. A *status confessionis* is a confessing act in response to a situation where the integrity of the Gospel itself is at stake and calls the church to a faith response.

As we all know, this transformation was born under pain and brought relations within the World Alliance to the breaking point. The discernment that preceded the decision in Ottawa was robust and exposed divisions that were irreconcilable at the time. There was no middle ground that allowed a compromise. Confronted with the question of whether apartheid could be justified with the Gospel, the answer could only be yes or no. The declaration of the *status confessionis* consequently led to the suspension of those churches that, at the time, could not join the confession.

It is, however, essential to remember that this suspension was not and was never meant to be an ejection. In Ottawa, the Alliance declared that apartheid could not be justified by the Gospel and called the churches to active resistance. But the Council never claimed the authority to pronounce divine judgement on churches and definitely not on people. In Reformed understanding, suspension and dissent are possible outcomes of our common discernment of what God requires of us in a given situation. As Reformed Christians, we believe that every believer has received the gift of the Spirit and is called to prophetic witness. But this conviction does not lead to an unlimited relativism in which every position would be equally welcome.

It is the purpose of discernment to test the spirits. In the Reformed Church always reforming according to the Word of God, discernment is a process of continuous self-examination. If, in this discernment, certain positions are declared sinful and heretic, they have to be excluded from the discernment process because, otherwise, the integrity of the Gospel itself would be compromised. But—and this is important—

such a pronouncement must not ever mean that people and churches that continue to hold such positions would be banned indefinitely from the common search for the truth. According to Reformed understanding, dissenting people still have to be respected as readers of the Bible and seekers of divine truth, even if the disagreements have jeopardized the foundations for a common confession. And it is this respect for the dissenting person that locates even the sharpest disagreements in the horizon of hope. As a matter of principle, the discernment of the church is always open to the expectation that listening to God's Word will lead to an improved understanding of faith that would allow the church to confess in unity.

The processes that followed the decision of the Ottawa Council were good examples of the strength of Reformed discernment. The suspension did not close the discussion. In many ways, the interaction between the churches was even stronger than before. Even if they did not directly communicate, they knew very well what was going on in the other churches and responded to each other's initiatives. This continuous engagement led to processes of learning and transformation that allow us today to come together in discernment and bring our common witness into the life of the World Communion. In South Africa and the WCRC as a global body, different perspectives still persist, and not all conflicts are overcome. But today, these differences can be understood and respected as faithful contributions to the processes of discernment to which we believe that we are called together.

For the WCRC, this meeting of the Executive Committee in Johannesburg is, therefore, a moment of gratitude and great joy. In the engagement with the member churches in South Africa, the whole Communion has grown in becoming a *koinonia* marked by discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being reformed together, as we today describe the identity of the WCRC.

Covenanting in God's Mission

The theme of this Executive Committee meeting is "Covenanting in God's Mission." This phrase refers to the concluding section of the Accra Confession, which calls the churches to "covenanting for justice." The Accra Confession was drafted with strong participation from Christians in South Africa. Paragraph 24 directly quotes the justice article of the Confession of Belhar to express the belief "that God is a God of justice. In a world of corruption, exploitation and greed, God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, the exploited, the wronged and the abused."

The South African experience in overcoming apartheid has shaped the self-conscious tone of the Accra Confession: Principles do matter, Christian witness that is based on divine calling has an impact, and a church mobilized by an unambiguous faith stand becomes relevant. After 20 years, the Accra Confession is still remembered in particular for its conviction that prophetic proclamation has a political impact that leads to tangible change. Until today, this daring approach is a beacon of hope for

marginalized people from economic and political decision-making. This boldness, however, has also been criticized. Several people in our Communion have felt that by making far-reaching claims, like in the Accra Confession, the church overstretches its mandate and jeopardizes its political relevance.

In these controversies, however, it is sometimes overlooked that the Accra Confession does not only engage in economic justice proclamation but also addresses the identity and witness of the church. The Accra Confession understands the church's identity and witness according to the biblical concept of the covenant. God's covenant with the whole creation is the foundation of all communion and orders all relations in strictly egalitarian terms. The concept of justice that is enshrined in this idea challenges every form of power and rejects oppression and exploitation wherever they occur (§20).

Accra transforms the classic Reformed understanding of the covenant into a verb calling the churches to engage in continuous discerning, confessing, and witnessing processes. Theologically speaking, churches don't have static identities but live out their being church in covenanting relations: "We covenant in obedience to God's will as an act of faithfulness in mutual solidarity and in accountable relationships. This binds us together to work for justice in the economy and the earth both in our common global context as well as our various regional and local settings" (§37).

Since the General Council in Accra, this understanding of "covenanting" has guided the discussions on the witness and the self-understanding of the WCRC as a Communion. In 2022, the concept of "covenanting" was particularly significant in the discussions on extending its advocacy work and strengthening communion life in response to the challenges the WCRC is experiencing.

Covenanting in Advocacy

This covenanting approach has been guiding the WCRC's witness for economic justice since the Accra Council. Significant examples are the ZacTax campaign that calls and empowers churches to impactfully engage in debates on economic justice and the implementation of faith stand on the ordination of women that the 2017 General Council had adopted in Leipzig. Among member churches and the ecumenical movement, the advocacy work of the WCRC is well respected. More communions want to join the ecumenical fellowship that sponsors the NIFEA programme that was initiated by the WCRC and called for a new international financial and economic architecture. Several churches and communions are interested in the WCRC's advocacy for the ordination of women.

Partners and donor organizations also recognize the quality of the WCRC's advocacy work. We are delighted that, in cooperation with the Council for World Mission (CWM), we will be able to appoint a programme coordinator for gender justice and

look forward to Minwoo Oh from the Presbyterian Church in Korea joining the WCRC staff in June. One of her main tasks will be to conduct a gender audit among the member churches of the WCRC.

Generous support by the Presbyterian Church (USA), *Brot für die Welt*, and *Otto per Mille* has allowed us to start the implementation of the Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement programme (GRAPE) that the Executive Committee approved in November 2021.

The advocacy work of the WCRC follows a covenanting approach. While typically advocacy is defined as an action that argues for a cause or pleads on behalf of others, the GRAPE programme prepares and accompanies people from the churches to become effective advocates of their own issues of concern. Many member churches are already engaging in justice, peace, and reconciliation. Their voice has authority because of their proclamation's clarity and closeness to the people on the ground. But if churches begin to engage in advocacy work, they often experience problems. Professional advocacy requires skills that are not naturally available in church circles. If churches engage with governments and corporations and collaborate with specialized NGOs to pursue their causes, they are often not taken seriously. There are many examples where experts have taken over advocacy campaigns and started to define goals and strategies. The people on the ground are losing their say in the process and found themselves reduced to examples of the official communication of the campaign.

For this reason, the GRAPE programme operates based on a *local to global to local* approach, which itself is based on covenantal theology. In taking up this spirit, the GRAPE programme provides the skills and forms the networks that allow people from churches to engage economists and politicians successfully. It also prepares churches for collaboration with experts on local, regional, and global levels without losing control over the processes. The ultimate yardstick for the success of the campaigns is that they will lead to tangible improvements in the living conditions of the people.

In December 2022, we were able to appoint Muna Nassar as Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy to coordinate this new programme. The advocacy training programme is facilitated by the Economic Policy Research Institute in Cape Town, an organization with lots of experience accompanying advocacy programmes in marginalized communities. GRAPE training courses have started in Kenya and South Africa. They are preparing advocacy campaigns for access to potable water in draught-stricken Kenya and a Basic Income Grant to address abject poverty in South Africa. Trainees of both programmes will introduce the GRAPE programme to the Executive Committee during our meetings.

GRAPE is designed as a growth programme that can be rolled out in many more countries without overburdening the general secretariat. We hope to secure the funds to start training programmes in two other countries in 2024.

Covenanting in Communion

The WCRC, like many other ecumenical organizations, is structured according to an institutional model that only allows little flexibility in participating in the life of the Communion. Our organization is centralized: We have one governance structure, one budget, and one general secretariat tasked to facilitate the activities of the Communion. Regional structures and the possibility to associate and affiliate with the organization provide some space for flexibility. But these institutional arrangements fall short in describing the WCRC as a living Communion. Regions can only flourish if the member churches participate strongly in their events. Denominations are living organisms. People will only feel part of the WCRC if the Communion is a tangible reality in the life and mission of congregations, ministries, and individuals.

The WCRC is blessed that the Communion is much more vibrant than our institutional setting suggests. People all over the world identify with the justice message of the WCRC and bring this commitment to their missional activities. Churches are inspired by how other members live out their Reformed identity in the challenges of the 21st century. In the programme work of the WCRC, we never have a shortage of volunteers. People provide their gifts and their time because they regard the WCRC as relevant. Churches and partners are offering facilities and personnel capacities to strengthen the work of the WCRC.

This active support will allow us to welcome a third new staff member of the WCRC besides Muna Nassar and Munwoo Oh. In 2021, the Executive Committee decided to open a Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome in cooperation with the Waldensian Church and the Church of Scotland. In October 2022, we held the first Reformed Ecumenical Symposium that introduced the project to the ecumenical community in Rome. Last week, the representatives of the three sponsoring organizations met in the office of the Waldensian Church. They appointed a highly competent liaison officer who will be officially introduced into the position in November. We see this arrangement as an excellent example of how the WCRC can partner with member churches to secure the staffing needs to organize the life of the Communion.

In recent years, several WCRC committees and working groups have pointed to the richness of the contributions from member churches, networks, partners, and individuals and recommended a more strategic approach to welcome and utilize these gifts to sustain the Communion financially and structurally.

- The Sustainability Task Group that met in 2021-2022 and The Committee that discussed the future direction of the WCRC and will report at this meeting called for a “post-colonial” imagining of how members can

contribute to the life and work of the Communion needs to be undertaken. The WCRC should conduct a sustainability audit, which would allow members to note ways in which they could contribute to the work and witness of the WCRC, whether financially, in-kind, or through other means. Such a covenanting approach to sustainability would increase the level of ownership of the member churches in the life of the WCRC.

- The General Council Planning Committee that prepares the 2025 Council in Thailand recommends a Communion budget to which the whole Communion should contribute in various ways. Unlike in Grand Rapids and Leipzig, the hosting church cannot raise sufficient funds to balance the budget. The churches in the region have also pointed to their limitations. For the General Council to come together in the way that is described in the Constitution, we need a Communion-wide effort. The General Council Planning Committee has worked on a strategy that will distribute the obligations evenly without overburdening individual churches.
- This Executive Committee meeting is already an example of such covenantal ownership. We thank the member churches in South Africa for their generous support of the local budget and the many logistical contributions that will allow this meeting to flow smoothly. We also express our gratitude to the member churches and regions that provided finances for the travel of Executive Committee members. Contributions came from all over the world. This is a good expression of the commitment to the life of the WCRC.

Combining Programme Work and Member Church Relations

While the intention is to combine partner church visits with programmes, with the issue of sustainability looming large, the following partner church visits were made in 2022:

1. India: The Church of North India, the Church of South India, and the National Council of Churches in India were visited. The consultation of the Communion of Churches in India was also attended.
2. South Korea: Extensive visits to the Presbyterian Church of Korea and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and their institutions were made.
3. United States: Executive staff attended the synods of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA).
4. South Africa: Intensive talks with representatives of seven member churches were held during the GRAPE conference in Johannesburg.
5. Kenya: The GRAPE Conference in Nairobi offered the opportunity for talks with the member churches in Kenya.

6. Italy: During the Ecumenical Symposium in Rome and the WCRC Reformation Sunday worship service, good discussions with the Waldensian Church took place.
7. Ghana: There were extensive talks with the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, and the Trinity Theological Seminary, an affiliated member of the WCRC.

Cultivating a Just Communion

Youth

The WCRC is unequivocally committed to the participation of all young people at all levels of its governance and programme life. In order to implement the directives of the strategic plan, the WCRC intends to hold a youth summit with the explicit purpose of energizing the entire Communion through the engagement, participation, and leadership of young people. Conceptually the idea of the youth summit would be to bring together those progressive young people from across the Communion so that they would be able to offer leadership and vitality to both young people both within the Communion and the throughout the ecumenical movement.

Several online meetings were held with a core group that worked together to develop a concept note for a summit in 2024 with the theme “Shaking the Foundations: Youth and the Ecumenical Imperative.” This concept paper has been prepared by the young people themselves and will be used as the basis for fundraising and seeking partnerships. In 2023 the youth core group will meet to work out the programme of the youth summit in 2024.

George Lombard Prize

The George Lombard essay contest was conducted with essays invited on the theme “Ecumenism from the Margins: Confessing a God of Life in a World Fallen among thieves.” An expert panel made up of some members of the *Reformed World* Editorial Board and past winners of the Lombard Prize worked to select winners. A total of three prizes were awarded with one honourable mention. These will be published in a future edition of *Reformed World*.

Human Sexuality

A workshop on sexuality, continuing the Chennai process, will be conducted. While the Chennai processes concentrated on the communion aspects of the question of sexuality, this next consultation is to concentrate on the justice aspects and particularly how the communion may live out actions 56. This 2017 General Council Action Stated that the Council

- condemns all acts of violence against LGBTQ persons, regardless of our theological views, around the globe;
- confesses its complicity in supporting violence through its silence; and
- continues to commit itself to working for justice, freedom, and a safe world for all persons to flourish.

This consultation will be necessarily a face-to-face consultation which is planned to be held in November 2023. A working group has been formed and planning for the consultation to be held in India is already under way.

People living with disabilities

An issue of *Reformed World* on disabilities was published in 2022. Entitled “The Intersections of Church and Disability,” this issue was guest edited by Terry DeYoung (disability coordinator for the Reformed Church in America, working with the Christian Reformed Church in North America) and has 11 articles written by people living with disabilities, advocates and caregivers.

The next plans with people living with disabilities include working on a church’s mandate on disabilities.

Indigenous People

At the end of 2019, a detailed proposal for work with Indigenous people was proposed. Funding for this process was also secured. However, the pandemic made progress with this process difficult.

Finally, in October 2022, we were able to initiate our work with Indigenous people with an Asian-focused consultation on theological education and Indigenous people. The consultation brought theological educators, mission practitioners, church leaders, and seminary students to discuss theological education from an Indigenous people’s perspective. The consultation resulted in the production of two syllabus for courses from an Indigenous peoples’ perspective. It is hoped that one of these courses will be made into a workbook.

Covenanting for Justice

NIFEA

The New International Financial and Economic Architecture Process (NIFEA) is a joint ecumenical initiative of the World Council of Churches (WCC), WCRC, Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Council for World Mission (CWM), and World Methodist Council (WMC), the last of which joined in 2021. NIFEA emerged out of a shared

commitment to covenanting for justice in the economy and in the earth and the need to work together to have a meaningful impact.

In April 2022 NIFEA held side-events on “Debt and Climate Finance: Faith Perspectives and Proposals” at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) Spring Meetings Civil Society Policy Forum.

In dialogue with the IMF and WB, church, civil society, and government representatives reflected on the intersections between climate change and indebtedness from faith-rooted and ethical perspectives. Concrete policy proposals to address these intersecting concerns were discussed.

GEM School

In August 2022, the fifth GEM school was conducted in Berlin and had the same cohort as the 2020 GEM school that could not meet during the pandemic. The GEM school brought together 20 candidates from various churches and institutions for capacity building and training.

GEM School Manual (in progress)

The GEM School manual will gather a variety of perspectives in alternative economic and theological thinking for an Economy of Life, serving as an important resource for GEM School students and possibly a different way of offering GEM School post-pandemic. It is targeted to be released in 2023.

5th Meeting of the Ecumenical Panel on NIFEA

In October 2022, ahead of the G20 Summit in Bali, the Ecumenical Panel on a NIFEA as well as resource persons and observers from regional thinktanks, hosting churches, Roman Catholic Church, and other faiths (around 30 in-person participants and 5 online participants) met to identify emerging and persisting elements of financial, economic, and climate injustice and to discern priority areas for engagement for new and renewed actions and alliances.

NIFEA letter to G20 leaders on intertwined crises

Addressing the G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia, November 2022, the joint WCC-WCRC-LWF-CWM-WMC letter discerned three interrelated, interconnected crises affecting the planet—a social crisis from rising inequalities, the climate catastrophe, and a broader economic crisis.

ZacTax Campaign

Work on the ZacTax campaign continues with a specific focus on Latin America, Europe, and India. The Latin American region conducted a workshop at the WCC Assembly on the ZacTax campaign (see the AIPRAL Report for more information).

Women in Leadership Roundtable

Along with CWM, the WCRC brought together a roundtable of women in leadership. This roundtable brought together women in senior positions of church leadership and young women under the theme, “Honouring our Mothers, Lamenting with Our Sisters and Rejoicing with Our Daughters.” Held in October 2022 this roundtable offered the opportunity for women to intergenerationally share and dream together, planning into the future.

Gender Audit

A gender audit was launched in December last year. The task of the gender audit is to document the status of women in our member churches. This will be done through a survey mechanism which is hoped will work to generate change. The audit will seek to discover the answers to three questions, firstly what are the churches saying about women, secondly what is the actual status of women in the churches, and thirdly what are the aspirations of women of the churches. The survey will be sent out in 2023 and will be supported by the coordinator for gender justice.

Decade for Climate Justice

The working group for the Decade for Climate Justice met to settle on a theme and work out a programmatic outline for the next five years. The theme for the Decade has been selected as “Learning from the Earth: Witnessing to Climate Justice.” A programmatic direction for the next five years has also been charted out and will be publicly launched soon.



Season of Creation

The WCRC continues to work with Season of Creation, an ecumenical initiative bringing together Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants to celebrate creation and raise awareness of ecological justice. The WCRC has a place on the steering committee and also helps in the organization and preparation of the ecumenical worship that starts and ends the Season of Creation.

Doing Theology for Transformation

Freedom of Religion

While there were plans in place to conduct a consultation with the Lutheran World Federation on the question of the Freedom of Religion and to be able to present a protestant position paper on this issue, a full-fledged meeting was not possible in 2022. Instead a planning meeting that brought a core group from both communions was conducted. It is anticipated that the conference will now be held later in 2023.

Theological Education Consultation

In the light of the pandemic and theological education moving online, a joint hybrid consultation entitled “Online Theological Education: Pandemic and Pedagogy” was conducted in Ghana. This was a joint consultation along with the WCC-EET, LWF, and the EMW.

Engaging God’s Mission in Contexts of Crisis

Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE)

As has already been noted above, the GRAPE programme supports churches in their advocacy for economic justice, peace, and reconciliation. Structured according to the principle “local to global to local,” GRAPE organizes churches in a particular country and offers a five-year training programme during which five cohorts of trainees develop, prepare, and implement advocacy strategies. Throughout the programme, the trainees work in close collaboration with the “platforms” that gather representatives of churches and other civil society groups that are committed to the advocacy project and use the programme to effectively advocate issues of particular concern.

Solidarity with Ukraine

Global Peace Prayer for Ukraine

The WCRC along with the LWF, Conference of European Churches, Methodist World Conference, World Mennonite Council, and the Baptist World Alliance organized a Global Peace Prayer for Ukraine. This peace prayer, held online, brought voices to pray for global peace in general and the situation in Ukraine in particular. About 5000 people attended this peace prayer.

Ukraine Network

Already before the Russian invasion, the general secretariat, in connection with WCRC Europe, has invited member churches, mission organizations and other partners to join a network on Ukraine. The purpose of this network is to support member churches in Ukraine, coordinate humanitarian relief, and critically engage with the theological justifications of the war.

Plans also have been made for a solidarity visit to Ukraine. However, the war and political instability have prevented it. A visit in mid-2023 is now planned.

Christian Zionism

The WCRC participated in and supported a consultation on Christian Zionism in Chile. This event looked at the legacy of colonialism in both regions as expressed in apartheid. This event looked at the legacy of colonialism as a strategy for subjugating marginalized communities and worked to strengthen partnerships between Palestine and South America.

Working with All the Partners God Provides

Ecumenical Assemblies

WCC Assembly Theme Reflection: Come Join the Circle.

In July 2022, the WCRC called together a consultation to offer a Reformed reflection on the theme of the WCC Assembly. The theme of the WCC Assembly was “Christ’s Love moves us to reconciliation and unity.” Twenty-five people from all over the world gathered at this consultation and came out with a reflection entitled “Come Join the Circle.” The reflection was published in a booklet that was circulated to all member churches and widely publicized including through WCC sources.

Programme Work at the WCC Assembly

The WCRC had several opportunities for engagement at the WCC Assembly:

1. Organizing the Communion Meeting: During the communion gatherings the WCRC was able to speak to the many members from its own communion that had gathered there. The programmatic outline for the last

- year was shared. A special prayer service to dedicate the incoming general secretary of the WCC, Jerry Pillay was also conducted.
2. Two workshops, one on the Faith Declaration on the Ordination of Women and a second on the ZacTax were also supported by the WCRC. Both these workshops were well attended.
 3. The WCRC was responsible for the setting up of two booths at the assembly. One was the WCRC booth and this was used as an opportunity to meet as many people as possible and collect data from our membership. The second was a booth on the ZacTax campaign and NIFEA to create awareness around tax justice.

Lambeth Conference, Pentecostal World Conference, Global Christian Forum Executive

We participated in the above meetings and fostered ecumenical partnerships.

Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome

As was noted above, a liaison officer for the Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome will be appointed shortly to begin work later this year. This person will liaise with different dicasteries of the Vatican that deal with theological and justice issues but also the wide ecumenical network of Catholic and Protestant organizations in the city. Once a year, the office, in collaboration with the Waldensian Faculty of Theology, will organize an ecumenical symposium to bring significant Reformed initiatives to the wider ecumenical attention.

The Church of Scotland funds a 50% position for the liaison officer. The office will be located in the offices of the Tavola Valdese. The WCRC provides funds for programme work. The work is accompanied by an advisory board that comprises of representatives of the three organizations.

Mennonite Reformed Dialogue

Planning meetings for a Mennonite Reformed Dialogue took place in November 2022. 2025 will mark 500 years of the violence against the Mennonites in Zurich. This dialogue seeks to work through a process of “right remembering” that focuses on the similarities in theological vision as well as present political situatedness of both communions.

Creating a Communion Structure

In 2021 the Strategic Programme Planning Group (SPPG) called for a change in the perception of how the work of the general secretariat is conducted. The focus of the secretariat should move from implementing to coordinating and networking. This changed approach has brought the Hannover office closer to the member churches.

As can be seen above, we now conduct more and more programmes with and through the member churches and have received much appreciation for these initiatives.

This transformation into a communion office raises organizational and administrative challenges. As one can see in this report, it has been relatively easy for the WCRC to raise programme funds and finance the necessary programme staff. At the same time, the difficulties in fundraising for operational costs—leadership, communication, and administration—still persist. Even if the WCRC is less engaging in the implementation of programmes, also a communion office that focuses on coordination and networking needs capacity. We, therefore, look forward to the decisions on the leadership model and the future structure of communication that will be discerned at this meeting and bring our need for additional administrative staff to your urgent attention.

2022 has had its challenges. After the end of the pandemic, the programme work recommenced and due to previous commitments, we had to conduct more programmes than we would usually organize. This burden has put extraordinary stress on all the colleagues in the secretariat. The cut of one administrative position in summer 2021 combined with the inability to fill one of the three remaining administrator positions has only exacerbated this situation.

When the incumbent administrator for the general secretariat left the position in October 2022, it was decided to enter into a review process to ensure that the position was not an impossible one. This was soon broadened into a review of the operations and administration of the office as a whole. Johann Weusmann and Gerhard Plenter Plenter from the Evangelical Reformed Church have been working with the CGS and staff to determine the best configuration of the administrators—for both assigned responsibilities and reporting lines. Also included are the development of systems that will bolster the ability to run an effective global office. It is anticipated that this process will conclude in June, with the hiring of the third administrator to follow shortly thereafter.

Much appreciation and thorough thanks should be given to both Amritha Perumalla and Anna Krüger for their ongoing work in administration.

We also have been blessed with three excellent interns over this last year, each of whom have contributed in their own unique way and all of whom have provided important assistance in the work of the organization.

We have said thank you and good-bye to intern Modesta Mekerese from the Church of Christ (Zimbabwe) / Disciples of Christ World Communion, who completed her year with us at the end of April. We will soon wish Ismetyati (Taya) Tuhuteru (*Gereja*

Protestan Maluku (GPM)) a fond farewell as she will complete her time with us at the end of May. Finally, Priyanka Gupta (Church of North India) will depart in July.

For the next year, we are moving back to our tradition of having two interns instead of the three of this past year. Incoming interns are Sharon Thiongo from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, who will join in early June, and Laura Gómez Reyes of the Presbyterian Church in Colombia, who will begin in July.

It should also be noted that there is an ongoing conversation with RCA Global Mission to find and fund a successor minister at the RELISH congregation, who could also work part time with the WCRC, providing support to CANAAC, amongst other responsibilities. RELISH—the Reformed English Language International Service Hannover (www.relish4hannover.org)—is the worshiping congregation of the international contingent of the WCRC (along with a growing number of English-speaking Christians in the city), and a partnership between the WCRC, the *Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirchengemeinde Hannover*, and RCA Global Mission. Its current pastor, Gretchen Schoon Tanis, is an ordained minister of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and wife to Phil. It is anticipated that a successor(s) will be identified soon and will be funded and ready to assume ministerial responsibilities in 2024.

Governance

While the Officers' Committee continued to meet regularly via Zoom, their first face-to-face meeting since the pandemic began was held at the end of October in Rome. The meeting happened alongside the annual Rome Ecumenical Symposium, at which Reformed theologians discuss current issues, and the Reformation Day service, done last year in partnership with the Waldensian Church and held at the Waldensian Church at the Piazza Cavour (and live-streamed globally). It is planned that this year's Reformation Day service will be held in Indonesia.

The centerpiece of the meeting was a SWOT analysis of the Communion and the discussion and decisions which followed, which included a process to review administrative staffing responsibilities and systems (see details below, under Personnel).

It was also at this meeting—taking place a day after the WCRC signed another three-year agreement with *Otto per Mille* to continue in a funding partnership—that the decision was made to put the Reformed Partnership Fund on hold for 2023 (please see the pertinent section below).

Preparatory work has also been done for the Constitution and Membership Committee, which will gather face-to-face for the first time since the pandemic during this Executive Committee meeting. Work must begin on a constitutional

review in order to present any proposed amendments to the 2024 Executive Committee, as well as a review of pending membership applications.

Membership Re-engagement Process

As was reported by the General Treasurer at the 2022 Executive Committee meeting, more than 70% of WCRC member churches are not financially contributing regularly to the Communion. It was agreed that this is a critical issue to be addressed.

Thus, a “Memer Church Re-engagement Plan” was written and implemented. One of the underlying challenges is ensuring that member church contact information is regularly updated. This is a larger issue than simply having a database that works (which we have had since 2016, with Salesforce and now CiviCRM). To do this properly requires a system to obtain and process contact data and the capacity to do so.

Contributing to the capacity issue is the fact that most member churches do not proactively communicate changes in leadership (or contact data) when those are made. Thus, additional time and attention is needed to track down these changes. While there have been numerous discussions about a system through which data can be collected and processed, this could never be fully operationalized—due mostly to capacity constraints (the database management responsibilities are in the job description of the long-vacant administrator position).

Even through our regular communications to member churches—which include *Reformed Communiqué* (three times yearly), *Reformed World* (twice yearly), Executive Committee Minutes (annually), and annual dues notices—we do not usually obtain updated contact information.

Thus, at the beginning of this process, we could not with full certainty confirm how many of the non-paying/non-communicative members have actually been contacted. The goal of the re-engagement plan was to verify and/or update as much contact information as possible. This was done through two steps.

Step One: Updating Contact Information

We began with a search for public contact information online (completed in July 2022). Based on this updated information, regional council leaders were provided with a list of members within their boundaries and asked to double-check and then confirm or update the information. Unfortunately, we did not receive responses from all of our regions—and much of Asia and the Pacific are without formal regional councils.

We next took advantage of the World Council of Churches Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, during which we collected dozens of contact forms and business cards. The interns duly entered all of this information into the database.

Step Two: (Re)Establishing Contact

Thus, by the end of September, we had done what we could to update contact information. We then set about testing it. While financial contributions are clearly noted in the constitution and bylaws as a requirement for membership, there is also the matter of both how members contribute to the Communion and a requirement to communicate if they cannot donate financially.

Thus, the framing of the initial correspondence to uncommunicative churches was one that was welcoming and inquisitive, wondering how the church is doing, noting that their participation in the Communion has been missed, and requesting a response to ensure we are communicating with the proper leadership. Email messages were sent in October with physical letters mailed in November. A second message, this time with more urgency in its tone, was sent to non-responders in January.

The following table shows the percentage of payments by region (with at least one payment received since 2018) and the percentage of members in contact (through payments, a response, or both). The Caribbean & North America region has identical numbers for both columns, meaning that no non-paying churches have responded to the recent messages. Thus, for the other regions, the increase in the “In Contact” column means that some non-paying churches have responded.

Region	Dues payments (since 2018)	In Contact (response/pay)
Africa	31%	45%
Asia	42%	67%
Caribbean & North America	70%	70%
Europe	92%	95%
Latin America	27%	41%
Pacific	29%	43%

Both regional councils and member of the Executive Committee were sent updated contact information for their areas in March. Again, only a few replied with verification of the data or updates. Efforts will continue to work with the regions to ensure that the contact data for member churches is accurate.

Step Three: Systemization

In the absence of a database manager, the systemization within the office of updating contact information has not been implemented. Instead, the executive for communications, with assistance from the interns, has been updating information as it is received (much of which consists of returned mail).

Once a database manager is in place, not only will in-house systemization become a priority, but the regional councils will be invited to utilize the WCRC database, effectively enlarging the pool of people maintaining it. In addition, after the new bookkeeping system is installed in the finance office (expected later this year or early next), it will be connected to the database.

It is also expected that as the General Council approaches, we will hear from more member churches, which will both verify our data and increase the number of members paying their dues. However, it should be noted that only 60% of members sent delegations to the last General Council, which is the same percentage as are already in contact or paying their dues.

Communications

Despite ongoing capacity challenges, communications work continued, including regular news articles, posting to social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), monthly eNewsletters, three issues of *Reformed Communiqué*, an edition of *Reformed World*, the development of five COVID & Beyond highlight booklets, and a strong presence at the World Council of Churches Assembly in Karlsruhe—with arguably the most popular sticker there (among many other promotional pieces and resources):



However, both the redeveloped website and series of introductory videos took longer than expected. The debut of the website (featuring the videos) had been planned for this year's Executive Committee meeting, but it is apparent at the time of

this writing, this will not happen; the latest delay being a glitch in the language plugin that is preventing the uploading of translated text, which the website developers are attempting to resolve.

The new website will continue to be in eight languages (English, Spanish, French, German, Korean, Chinese, Bahasa Indonesia, and Arabic), and thanks must be given to the cadre of translators who translated nearly 12,000 words (37 pages of text), and to intern Priyanka Gupta who has been the primary uploader of the translated text. A ninth language will also be added to certain sections of the site—Thai—to better promote the 2025 General Council.

Both the new website and the current site are benefiting from a new source of ecumenical images. Life on Earth Pictures is a relatively new consortium of some of the best religious photographers who have pooled their work together in an online library accessed through subscription. A donation from the Zurich Cantonal Church has provided for our initial subscription to the site, which is also providing stock video footage for our introductory videos.

An increasing amount of communication work in the coming year will be focused on the 2025 General Council, with the development of a logo in process (at the time of this writing), and a number of resources, news articles, and correspondence being both planned and prepared. This will also include a section on the new website dedicated fully to the Council.

Reformed Partnership Fund

The Reformed Partnership Fund (RPF) of the WCRC has provided small grants and other resources to churches that carry out development projects important to the life of a church and its surrounding community, particularly in the Global South. In the last several years, these projects have fallen within the guidelines as established by *Otto per Mille* (OPM), the primary funding partner, as well as the Church of Westphalia, which also contributes funds. These grants are intended to strengthen the tie of member churches to the WCRC, as well as meet strategic objectives of both the member church and the Communion as a whole.

Current Projects

The following projects began in 2021 and continued into 2022:

1. Wholistic Transformation in Eastern Province, Church of Central Apria Presbyterian, Zambia Synod
2. COVID Relief for Internally Displaced Christian Women, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
3. Mission Response to Covid-19, United Church of Zambia

4. COVID Response Project – IT and Outreach Ministry, Church of North India
5. Social Inclusion for Families with Children with Disabilities, Presbyterian Church in Rwanda
6. After-school classes for Roma Children in Transcarpathia Ukraine, Reformed Church in Transcarpathia
7. Evangelism, Training and Development, Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar
8. Engage Disability, Christian Service Agency, Church of North India
9. Education and Capacity Building for Diocesan Leaders, Church of North India
10. COVID-19 Relief for Senior Citizens and Orphans, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Zimbabwe Synod
11. COVID-19 and Refugee Relief, Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar
12. Typhoon Relief, United Church of Christ in the Philippines

As in the past, a call for applications was published in 2022, and 29 applications for regular projects were submitted. Given the reduced staff capacity and the more demanding reporting framework, it was decided to reduce the number of projects while increasing the amount granted to each project. Though this meant a higher risk for the WCRC in relationship to donor reporting, fewer projects meant more accompaniment, involvement, and strengthening of work. Based on the guidelines of the funding partners and the trajectories of the current Strategic Plan, the RPF Committee selected the following 8 projects to be funded (which began in August 2022 and are to be completed by July 2023):

1. Rehabilitation of Church Guesthouse, Baraka Presbyterian Church, Palestine
2. Peacebuilding, Presbyterian Church of South Sudan and Sudan
3. Rehabilitation of Nigeria Mission Hospital, Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
4. Hybrid B.Th. Degree Programme (Stellenbosch University), Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa
5. Elderly and Disabled People’s Ministry, Church of Bangladesh
6. Food Security through Family Gardens, *Iglesia Reformada Calvinista de El Salvador*
7. Network and Communication Improvement, United Church in the Solomon Islands
8. Re-establishing Veenstra Reformed Theological Seminary after Covid-19, Reformed Church of Christ, Nigeria

The RPF also provided emergency grants to the following three member churches:

1. Relief Efforts after Landslides and Heavy Rainfall, United Presbyterian Church of Brazil

2. Economic Relief Project Lebanon, National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon
3. Emergency Flood Damage Rehabilitation, Presbyterian Church in Rwanda

In total, the RPF funded eight regular projects and three emergency projects in 2022 for a total of 230,000 euros.

Future of the Fund

In October 2022, the WCRC signed a new contract with *Otto per Mille* for another three years. The upcoming contract (2023-2025) is unfortunately impacted by pandemic-induced reductions, and the WCRC shall be receiving less money than past years. The Church of Westphalia is also decreasing their contribution.

In addition, OPM has adjusted their reporting requirements and approval process schedule with project applications now due in January of the year. The previous deadline was June, which aligned relatively well with our traditional Partnership Fund application process.

These changes, combined with on-going staff capacity issues, led to the recommendation from the Collegial General Secretariat that the Partnership Fund be suspended for 2023, a decision which was endorsed by the Officers Committee in Rome (October 2022):

Agreed: to put the Partnership Fund on hold for 2023 and use this time to reevaluate the Fund with the Partnership Fund Committee and decide on whether it can continue (and, if so, how it will be funded and managed).

The RPF Committee will meet in South Africa, within the context of the Executive Committee meeting, to discuss whether the Fund should continue, as well as how best to reach the strategic goal of strengthening the communion with or without the Partnership Fund (including what other means may be available).

Thanks

When Werner Joecker left the WCRC in 2021, primary responsibility for the management of the Fund moved to Amritha Perumalla, with Anna Krüger providing support in the financial aspects (both in funding transfers and report analysis). During her time with the WCRC, intern Ismetyati (Taya) Tuhuteru has provided the administrative support in processing reports.

Thanks should be given to all three for their excellent work in building relationships with and providing support to Fund recipients, as well as for ensuring that reporting to both OPM and the Church of Westphalia has been effective.

Conclusion

Several of our challenges persist, but we look into the future with hope. Several of the processes that we have started in the past years are coming to fruition. The different working groups have done remarkable work. The deliberations and proposals that we will discern during this meeting have the potential to stabilize the Communion, help us to accomplish our goals and give firm direction for the journey of the WCRC. The commitment of everyone involved was remarkable, and we want to express our deepest gratitude for the friendship, the inspiration and the quality of the work that has been done.

“Covenanting in God’s mission” is the theme of this Executive Committee meeting. God’s covenant calls us into communion and commits us to justice. As a small and fragile organization, the WCRC may be assured that God will be faithful to all creation as God has promised in Hosea 2:18:

“I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground, and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety.”

Amen.

Report of the Strategic Plan Programme Group

The Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) is charged with providing review and oversight to the programmatic work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. While it meets virtually throughout the year, its primary point of review is in an annual face-to-face meeting. This year's meeting was held in Detroit, Michigan, USA, 16-18 March. In attendance were: Anna Case-Winters, Roderick Hewitt, HyeRan Kim-Cragg, Rathnakara Sadananda, and Karen Georgia Thompson with President Najla Kassab joining through Zoom, along with the members of the Collegial General Secretariat and intern Priyanka Gupta providing support.

Evaluation of WCRC Programme Work

The SPPG received a full orientation to all the programmes as well as substantial accountability reports from the programme executives in each of the five program areas:

1. Cultivating a Just Communion
2. Covenanting for Justice
3. Doing Theology for Transformation
4. Engaging God's Mission in a Context of Crisis
5. Working with All the Partners God Provides

The reports included both quantitative and qualitative assessment. The SPPG did assessment work looking at the programmes through the lenses of: discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being reformed. We also asked the question: what worked well, what did not, and how can we improve?

Assessment of the 2017-2024 Strategic Plan

The quantitative analysis of programmes held from 2017-2024, encompassing the current Strategic Plan, shows that of the 60 programmes defined in the plan, 54 will either be completed or be still ongoing because of their continuous character.

Programmes have been conducted in all regions of the WCRC, in many instances with active participation of WCRC regions and member churches.

AIPRAL: 4	South Asia: 2
CANAAC: 7	Southeast Asia: 6
ACRC: 9	NEAAC: 8
Europe: 16	Indonesia: 5
Middle East: 4	Pacific: 6

The SPPG expressed its appreciation of the WCRC programme work since the Leipzig General Council. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the reduced staff capacity since 2021, the many programmes planned went forward and

almost all the programmes have been accomplished in one way or another. The qualitative assessment of programmes affirmed the high quality of WCRC programmes and the widespread appreciation by member churches and partners.

Partnering to Expand Staffing Capacity

Also remarkable has been the creative work done with partners to increase staff capacity:

- With the support of the PC(USA), *Brot für die Welt* (Bread for the World), and the EMW, WCRC set up the position of an Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy with a five-year appointment of Muna Nassar from Palestine.
- With the support of the Council for World Mission, WCRC is in the process of appointing a Programme Coordinator for Gender Justice with a five-year appointment of Minwoo Oh, who is a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Korea.
- The Church of Scotland is funding a 50% position of a mission partner who will work as a liaison officer in the Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome, which will support the ecumenical work of the WCRC, the Waldensian Church, and the Church of Scotland.
- In preparation for the 2025 General Council, WCRC is currently negotiating financial support for a General Council Coordinator and finding ways to maximize current resources for necessary administrative work (such as travel coordination).

Recommendation:

The SPPG celebrates the expansions in staffing these partnerships make possible. At the same time the SPPG commends that care be taken to ensure that there is clarity regarding these new positions with regard to reporting within the system and oversight, especially as these positions are supported and/or coordinated with other partners.

The Collegial General Secretariat (CGS) was, in its inception, an urgent and temporary response to the challenge of not being able to fund the general secretary position. The executive secretaries rose to the challenge of taking on the additional responsibilities during the interim. The model has proven to be very workable, fully collaborative and collegial, and very effective in getting the work done. However, there is a challenge with regard to the workload. The interim has extended and there are still insufficient funds for the general secretary position. Each person carries a portion of the work of the general secretary—an additional 25% on top of what were already fulltime positions. Furthermore, the office is currently down an administrative assistant which increases the administrative burden. Each executive secretary is, in effect carrying 150%. On top of this is the work that must be done to prepare for General Council, yet another fulltime job. This situation is untenable and needs attention.

SPPG Recommendations:

- **The SPPG questions whether the current work load arrangement is sustainable or wise or just. We commend remediation in the short term by securing help from volunteers and seconded staff from member churches.**
- **The SPPG recommends that priority be given to finding administrative staff support and a person who will coordinate preparations for General Council.**
- **The SPPG also commends development of a long-term strategy for addressing the challenge of funding for adequate staffing. We recognize this as a systemic problem and a long-standing challenge requiring more than emergency relief.**
- **The SPPG recommends evaluation of how this increased work load has impacted the persons and the programmes.**
- **The SPPG commends evaluation of how the Communion's relevance and effectiveness in the ecumenical world may be impacted. In ecumenical work it may be advantageous to designate one person as chief ecumenical officer.**

SPPG discussed briefly the advantages of having one person among the CGS to serve as "Acting General Secretary" in a "first among equals" role that maintains our collegial commitment.

Setting Priorities

When we prioritize, it seems there is more to do. What mechanisms can be put into place to support the work we're doing? There are two stressors that may impact effectiveness in our programs: 1) the amount of work to be done and 2) the fragility of the system. To be always working at the edge is stressful. What is the best use of our capacity? What is much too much? We may need to reassess how much can realistically be expected programmatically with the staffing in the current configuration. A part of the question is: in the midst of everything we see happening globally, how do we come to a plan that is going to be sustainable and realistic in the context of where we are? Are there programmes that have run their course? When do some programs end and new programs take their place? What are some of the other burning issues that need to gain attention? How do we set priorities given that we cannot do everything? What needs to be let go of? How do we prioritize programmes when not everything planned can be accomplished?

SPPG Recommendation: In response to the questions program executives raised above the SPPG offered these suggestions in the way of prioritizing.

- **The four programs planned on the way to General Council are high priorities.**
- **Programs that engage youth and look to the future are priorities.**

- **Climate justice is a priority in relation to the Decade for Climate Justice**
- **We should ask, what is most urgent, what is timely?**
- **What is likely to have real impact?**
- **If there are other programs/activities that can be postponed until after General Council, they probably should be.**

Ongoing Assessment

It is very important that programmes have built-in evaluation tools; continuous assessment with a clear outcome-related template. It is important to begin with “why” before moving to “what.” Concept notes are written whenever a new programme is planned and these are effective in setting the course for them. It needs to be something that does not create another layer of administrative overhead. Working from the concept notes, a clear set of assessment questions can be drawn up. Survey Monkey could be utilized as an analysis tool. It may be that this evaluation role should not fall to the programme executives.

SPPG Recommendation:

SPPG recommends that we find a “right sized” means of ongoing evaluation that does not overburden the staff but allows for ongoing assessment.

Preparing for the 2025 General Council

There are four major consultations coming which will lead toward the Council:

1. COVID & Beyond: As we bring this programme to a conclusion with a face-to-face consultation (“Beyond COVID”). This work will inform some of the content as well as methods for the Council. In Brazil, August.
2. What does it mean to “persevere in your witness”? Theologians, biblical scholars, activists, artists, etc. will be brought together to develop resources to expound upon the theme. In Bangkok, June.
3. Empire: This is an amorphous term; what is meant by it? What is the impact of it? Is it offering a lens to read society today? What are the theological aspects of this at a time of immense and concentrated political, economic, and military power? A consultation on this will be held, perhaps in conjunction with the Council for World Mission. In Indonesia, October.
4. A consultation on WCRC identity and communion. What does it mean to go from being an “alliance” and a “council” to being a “communion”? In Germany, November.

There are a number of events that invite commemoration in 2025: 1) the WCRC will turn 150 years old, which invites some reflection (identity) 2) 500 years since the execution of the Anabaptists in Zurich (dialogue with Mennonites will take this up); 3) WCC focus on 1,700 years of the Nicaean Creed (confessing and empire); 4) 100 years of the United Church of Canada (with something planned for June which may resonate at the Council). 5) 2024 is the 20-year anniversary of the Accra Confession.

SPPG Recommendation:

The SPPG heartily affirms these programmes planned on the way to General Council. These are high priority programmes between now and 2025.

Finance Report

from General Treasurer Johann Weusmann

Operational Budget

1. Income: Operations

The operations portion of the budget, which includes salaries, office costs, governance, communications, and other costs related to running the organization has four main sources of income: membership dues, administrative fees taken from grants to the programme activities, donations/grants, and investment earnings.

1.a. Membership Dues

While in the previous budget year membership dues were at the lowest level since the relocation to Hannover in 2013, in the budget year 2022, membership contributions increased from 706,823 to 762,350, thus surpassing those of 2019-2021 and coming close to the contribution levels of 2016 and the General Council year 2017.

A total of 57 churches contributed in 2022. This is close to the number of contributing churches and thus around 20 below the number of contributing churches in 2020. The overall increase in membership contributions is therefore due to arrear payments and increased contributions, most notably an increase of around 16,000 euros from the PC(USA), which comes after a decrease in contributions in the amount of 45,000 euros in 2020, and the payment of multiple-year dues from the Presbyterian Independent Church of Brazil and the Evangelical Christian Church in Papua (Indonesia).

Only Africa had lower contributions than budgeted. The actual contribution coming from Africa in 2019 was 15,500 euros from 9 churches and increased in 2020 to 22,300 euros with a budget figure of 23,000, with contributions from 15 churches, including several arrear payments. In 2021, the total contributions decreased to 14,600 euros with only 7 churches contributing. The contribution level decreased further in 2022 to a total of 11,500 coming from five churches.

Even though the CANAAC budget figures had been decreased from 235,000 to 210,000 the actuals surpassed the former budget figure.

Regional Membership Fees	Budgeted EUR	Actuals EUR	Difference EUR
Africa	23.000,00	11.490,00	-11.510,00
Latin America	2.000,00	8.732,00	6732,00
Caribbean and North America	210.000,00	242.036,28	32.036,28
Asia	60.000,00	67.221,65	7.221,65
Pacific	3.000,00	4.956,13	1.956,13
Europe	435.000,00	427.913,87	-7.086,13
total	733.000,00	762.349,93	- 29.349,93

Significant increases can be observed in the regions of Latin America, CANAAC, and Asia.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Africa	49,292	35,393	15,313	47,787	20,424
Latin America	4,784	8,488	4,149	5,521	8,441
CANAAC	228,394	230,028	275,951	265,268	290,047
Asia	60,770	53,901	59,909	56,378	68,230
Pacific	12,054	4,720	3,714	3,844	2,847
Europe	510,646	467,644	473,013	401,522	396,492
TOTAL	865,940	800,174	832,049	780,320	786,481
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Africa	37,307	15,460	22,330	14,630	11,490
Latin America	1,245	1,052	2,034	1,052	8,732
CANAAC	260,383	270,350	231,357	203,301	242,036
Asia	76,870	49,450	60,493	57,855	67,222
Pacific	5,971	4,508	2,956	4,300	4,956
Europe	502,833	412,597	437,045	425,682	427,913
TOTAL	884,609	753,420	756,218	706,823	762,350

Since 2013, the first year after the relocation from Geneva to Germany, income from member church dues to the operational budget has declined by around 100,000 euro, with the total annual contributions varying largely from year to year. In addition to the nominal decline, the decline in purchasing power from 2013 to 2022 was 11%. 865,940 euros in 2013 would only equal 770,350 in 2022.

In spite of the positive development in terms of total contributions, the number of contributing members remains low, thus the long-term trend in the decline of revenue from member churches to the operational budget needs to be noted, and those member churches that have not paid for several years will need special attention.

In spite of best efforts and exchange of information with regional councils, such as ACRC and AIPRAL, the WCRC office remains unable to establish communication with a significant number of member churches. The help of the regions with people on the ground assisting in the effort will be of utmost importance.

Churches that contributed in 2022:

Highest Contribution Churches

Presbyterian Church (USA): 176,042.47
Protestant Church of Switzerland: 130,533.86
Church of Lippe: 75,000
Evangelical Reformed Church: 75,000
Protestant Church in the Netherlands: 60,000
Presbyterian Church of Korea: 30,000
Church of Scotland: 29,000

Total contribution coming from the seven highest-paying churches: 575,576 (75.5% of overall contributions).

Africa

Evangelical Church of Morocco
Lesotho Evangelical Church
Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk
Evangelical presbyterian Church of Togo
Presbyterian Church of Mauritius

Asia

Christian Churches of Java
Church of Christ in Thailand
Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua
Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia
Gereja Protestan Maluku
Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China
National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon
Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea
Presbyterian Church of Korea
Presbyterian Church of Myanmar
Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East

Caribbean and North America

Christian Reformed Church in North America
ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians

Guyana Congregational Union
Lithuania Reformed Church USA
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Presbyterian Church in Grenada
Presbyterian Church of Canada
Reformed Church in America
United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands
United Church of Canada
United Church of Christ

Europe

Reformed Alliance
Reformed Church in Hungary
Ceskobratrská Církev Evangelická
Church of Lippe
Church of Scotland
Église protestante réformée du Luxembourg
Eglise Protestante Unie de France
Evangelical Church in Austria
Evangelical Church in Spain
Evangelical Church of Greece
Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland
Evangelical Reformed Church
Malagasy Protestant Church in France
Old Reformed Church in Lower Saxony
Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Presbyterian Church of Wales
Protestant Church in Switzerland
Protestant Church in the Netherlands
Tavola Valdese (Italy)
Union Nationale des Eglises Protestantes Réformées Évangéliques de France
Union of Welsh Independents
United Protestant Church of Belgium
United Reformed Church

Latin America

Evangelical Church of the River Plate
Presbyterian Independent Church of Brazil
Waldensian Evangelical Church of the River Plate

Pacific

Maohi Protestant Church
Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
Uniting Church in Australia

1.b. Administrative Fees

Thanks to considerable project donations by *Evangelische Mission Weltweit* (EMW), and the Church of Westphalia, as well as a number of smaller donations, approximately 42,300 euro were allocated to the core budget as administration fees. Due to a budget year that is different from the WCRC's, the *Otto per Mille* contribution for the year 2022 was not received within our 2022 budget year. Traditionally, the contribution is made at the beginning of the following budget year, i.e. the 2022 contribution was expected by March 2023. All programmes were thus pre-financed by WCRC. 21,200 euros in administrative fees will be allocated towards the 2023 operational budget when the funds are received. It is to be seen whether the 2023 contribution is made within our 2023 budget year. If so, administrative fees for both will be allocated towards the 2023 operational budget.

1.c. Donations/Grants

Staff costs continue to be funded in a significant amount by three main partners:

- 1) The Church of Westphalia pays the main portion of the salary of the executive secretary for communion and theology, with the WCRC paying only 22,700 euros annually for a difference between salary scales.
- 2) As in previous years, the salary for the executive secretary for justice and witness was covered almost in its entirety (98%) and considerable percentage (65%) of the salary for the administrator for programmes and projects was covered thanks to a donation to the core budget from the Council for World Mission (CWM).
- 3) Costs for the internship programme, including their salaries, are largely borne by EMW.
- 4) Personnel costs for the newly created position of the executive secretary for mission and advocacy are financed by a PC(USA).

The search for the executive secretary for mission and advocacy was financed with EMW funds through the GRAPE programme.

The PC(USA) contributed with 12,800 euros to the general secretary search.

1.d. Investment Income

Interest income is traditionally budgeted for very conservatively, as well as due to a downward trend being observed in 2020. However, while interest income was budgeted with 3,000 euro projected, the actuals were 37,500 euro (7,000 below those of 2021), coming from the investments with KD-Bank and the collective investment of the Reformed Church in Germany.

2. Expenditures: Operational

46% of the operational budget is spent on staff salaries. In 2022, these totals were: Executive Secretaries: Year-End Figure: 315,200; Budgeted: 308,000; Balance: -7,200. Administrators: Year-End Figure: 199,000; Budgeted: 257,000; Balance: 58,000. This is due to careful planning on the one hand, but more importantly due to the absence of an administrator for the general secretariat for five months (February-April, November-December).

Costs for staff were lower in 2022 than in previous years for several reasons: 1) the general secretary completed service in August 2021, the administrative staff moved from four to three individuals, 3) there were several months where there were only two administrators.

Other expenditures within the operational budget, including office costs, travel, and communications, all came in under budget, due in large part to remote work and the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

Additional savings of 20,000 euros were made for general secretariat expenses, mainly travel and other miscellaneous expenditures.

An allocation from reserves was made to cover increased IT costs in preparation of two new staff members, a fourth executive secretary, and a coordinator, as well as to carry out required updates to outdated equipment and services.

Costs were incurred for the planning phase of the General Council, with funds being allocated from the designated General Council reserve.

There was also a significant savings in 2022 as opposed to previous budget years due to the virtual Executive Committee meeting; these savings will not occur again in the future as in-person meetings are once again possible and desired.

3. Budget Risks

There are several risks to future operational budgets that need to be noted:

- Inflation is at its highest in recent decades, up to 8%, which will impact staff compensation increases and operational costs.
- A tariff increase has been approved on a national level, coming into effect in the coming months.
- Staff costs:
 - Operating once again with a full staff complement of three administrators and a general secretary will significantly increase expenditures.

- While the membership contribution level was higher in 2022 than in some previous years, many churches are reporting financial difficulties and decreasing membership numbers. The overall number of contributing churches has not increased. Post-pandemic related cuts are also still possible.
- A face-to-face Executive Committee meeting will increase expenditures by approximately 35,000 euro annually.
- A full-time general secretary would increase expenditures by around 170,000 euro per year, plus additional moving and any expat expenses.
- If a decision was made not to appoint an executive secretary for communications, savings would be around 134,000 from salary and pension contributions as well up to an average of 20,000 euros in expat expenses, such as tuition fees, from which the expenditures from any alternative new position would have to be deducted.
- Installation and removal costs for incoming/outgoing executive staff, expat expenditures. Especially in the case of staff with a dependent spouse and dependent children, as per the personnel policies and practices, costs are significantly higher due to tuition fees and home leave.

4. Year End Closing: Operational

The 2022 budget year was closed with a surplus of 210,393 euro.

This surplus was achieved in spite of careful budget planning due to a number of factors:

- Interest income was budgeted carefully with 3,000 euro projected vs. actuals of 37,500 euros (traditionally budgeted for very conservatively, as well as due to a downwards trend being observed in past years) coming from the investments with KD-Bank and the collective investment of the Reformed Church in Germany.
- Underspending of approximately 14,000 euro in communications outside of the website project (which itself is funded by grants).
- Minor accumulated underspending in a series of operational budget lines.
- Some of the expat expenditures as per personnel policies and practices for the former general secretary, such as removal costs, will only be incurred in 2023.
- A standard buffer for personnel costs had been budgeted for.

The surplus, even if it were to be repeated each year, falls short of the full costs of a general secretary and third administrator. Going forward, we cannot expect the surplus to be recurring.

While the financial situation appears stable at first glance, it is only stable because we have been operating under extraordinary circumstances (pandemic-related cuts in the past two years, a temporarily reduced staff complement, one-time project donations). There are not enough funds on an annual basis to carry out the constitutional business year after year under regular circumstances.

Programme Budget

5. Income and Expenditure Overview: Programmes

As per policy, programmes may only be implemented when the necessary funds have been raised. Thanks to several ongoing partnerships, obtaining funding for programmes has not been a challenge in recent years. In the past, with the impact of the pandemic and the enforced move to virtual meetings, it has been a challenge to meaningfully expend the funds on hand, as much of the programme money has traditionally been spent on bringing people together for face-to-face meetings and activities.

However, for the first time in the recent past, EMW funds were fully expended having no carry-over into 2023 as programme activities increased significantly in the year 2022.

Evangelische Mission Weltweit (EMW) contributed 270,000 euro as support for WCRC mission activities. EMW allows us to charge 15% in administrative fees of the total donation.

Carry over from 2021:	119,000
New income in 2022:	270,000
Subtotal in 2022:	389,000
Total expenditures:	389,000

Otto per Mille (OPM), from the Waldensian Church, was expected to contribute 350,000 euro in budget year 2022. Due to a difference in budget year schedules, the funds were not received within our budget year 2022. Thus, no funds were carried over into 2023. Admin fees are charged at 8% out of actual expenditures.

Carry over from 2021:	105,700
New income in 2022 as per contract:	350,000; received: 0,00
Subtotal in 2022:	105,700
Allocation from reserves to pre-finance programmes:	192,300
Total expenditures:	298,000

When the 2022 contribution is received, 23,800 euros will be allocated towards the operational budget as administrative fees and 192,300 will be returned to reserves. The total of funds carried over into the 2023 budget will be 133,900 euros. The ORA

was informed of this within the scope of the annual audit and agreed with the process.

The Evangelical Church of Westphalia supports WCRC theology work with a special focus on the Reformed Partnership Fund. The contribution was reduced from 29,000 to 20,300. 13,170 euro were carried over into 2023, reducing the annual carry over by approximately 11,000 euro. Admin fees are charged at 8% out of total donation in 2022.

Carry over from 2021: 24,600

New income in 2022: 20,300

Subtotal in 2022: 44,900

Total expenditures: 31,700

Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World) contributed with 50,000 euro towards the GRAPE programme, a multi-year programme with multiple donors (BfW, EMW, OPM, PC(USA)).

All 2022 funds were expended on programmatic work. The contract with Bread for the World foresees a contribution of 150,000 euro for the second project year.

6. Detailed Expenditures: Programmes

Programme costs continue to be funded in a significant amount by now four main partners: *Otto per Mille*, *Evangelische Mission Weltweit*, *Brot für die Welt*, and the Church of Westphalia

Details of the actual programme activities and their impact can be found in the reports of the Collegial General Secretariat and Strategic Plan Programme Group.

OPM Funds:

NIFEA: 38,700

Reformed Partnership Fund: 101,700

Reformed Partnership Fund – Emergencies Projects: 32,500

Peace and Reconciliation – Palestine: 25,000

Peace and Reconciliation – Korean Peninsula: 5,400

Ecology: 7,200

Indigenous People: 26,100

GRAPE: 61,400

TOTAL NET: 298,000

Admin fees to be allocated in 2023: 23,800

Carry-over into 2023 at end of budget year 2022: 0,00

Carry-over into 2023 after receipt of 2022 contribution: 133,900

EMW Funds:

Internship Programme: 63,300
COVID & Beyond: 20,100
Regional Empowerment: 49,100
GRAPE: 26,100
GRAPE – Mission & Advocacy Executive Secretary Search: 7,500
Strategic Planning: 29,100
Theological Education Network: 21,000
Freedom of Religion: 5,100
WCC Assembly (incl. pre-Assembly consultations): 92,600
Symposium: 34,600
Admin Fees: 40,500
TOTAL: 389,000
Carry-over to 2022: 0

Church of Westphalia Funds:

Reformed Partnership Fund – Theological Projects: 20,000
Reformation Sunday: 5,100
Reformed-Mennonite Dialogue: 5,000
Admin Fees: 1,600
TOTAL: 31,700
Carry-over to 2022: 13,200

Others Donors/Own funds:

Internship Programme: 14,100
Others: 9,200
(incl. 8% admin fees where applicable)
TOTAL: 23,300

7. Year End Closing: Programmes

We are grateful to the continuing support of our partners toward our programme work and for being able to return to more in-person meetings as pandemic travel restrictions lift.

8. Audit Report

The EKD High Audit Office confirms that the budget and asset accounting of the WCRC in the accounting year 2022 occurred in due form and in compliance with the relevant principles of orderly (budget) accounting and regulations, the financial statement for 2022 conveys an accurate image of the budget implementation as well as the situation of assets, finances and results which corresponds to the actual circumstances.

The High Audit Office generally reports no objections against the approval and authorization of the annual accounts by the Executive Committee, under the condition that by 2025 the WCRC General Finance Management Policies be fully implemented, mainly by introducing double-entry bookkeeping to replace the current cameralistic bookkeeping.

However, the High Audit Office's mandate within the German system goes further than that of ordinary auditors. The High Audit Office helps us to identify potential organizational risks.

We therefore welcome any comments to help improve our policies and processes. A process is in place to review, and implement where deemed necessary, by the proper WCRC authorities (be it management or governance) any such comments.

Within the scope of the 2022 audit, the High Audit Office worked on a general catalogue to review processes instead of focusing on one specific aspect of our operations, which in 2021 was that of personnel.

The Finance Committee is to vote on a set of recommendations prior to their formal presentation to the Executive Committee.

9. Reserves

Compared to the previous year, these assets have decreased by 303,032 euros (-6.06%).

The decrease is mainly due to three factors:

- 1) A depreciation of investments, most of which have since partially recovered with a continuing upward trend.
- 2) Reserve funds used to pre-finance projects. These funds are expected to be re-allocated to the reserve within the second quarter of the budget year 2023.
- 3) A decrease in designated programme funds due to decreased carry-over of programme funds.

The reserves of the WCRC amount to a total of roughly 4.7 million euro as per 31/12/2022.

Reserve assets (including trust assets, according to SB 92)	Opening Balance 01.01.2022 EUR
WCRC Capital	
Reserve Fund	512.204,86
IT Provision	32.063,59
Fundraising Fund	31.012,44
Reserve for FX Fluctuations	100.000,00
Designated Core Funds	46.086,19
Oikotree	4.768,09
Pension Contributions Reserve	1.019.440,73
Specific Asset Items	
General Council 2024 Fund	369.848,10
CWM Endowment Reserve	1.211.500,00
Endowment Contributions CWM	714.985,77
ACRC Investment Holding	0,00
Programmes (Structure as per Strategic Plan)	
P1 CULTIVATING A JUST COMMUNION	
Internship Programme	17.483,69
Internship Programme - Personnel Reserve	62.740,98
Regional Empowerment - Aipral	0,00
Reformed Partnership Fund D	473,00
Reformed Partnership Fund E	2.639,84
P2 COVENANTING FOR JUSTICE	
NIFEA - Campaigns	5.343,37
Ecology	130,34
Gender, Leadership and Power	40.459,33
TESF	2.294,54
RAN	4.061,40
P3 DOING THEOLOGY FOR TRANSFORMATION	
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	77.102,28
Theological Networks	4.595,32
P4 ENGAGING GOD'S MISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISIS	
Mission	10.829,48
P5 WORKING WITH ALL THE PARTNERS GOD GIVES US	
Catholic Dialogue	249,04
Key Initiatives	
EMW	119.000,59
OPM	105.734,20
Ev. Church of Westphalia	24.575,56

Custodian Funds	
Mission and Advocacy	145.695,26
Justice & Partnership Office Support	50.902,07
Justice and Witness	13.017,80
Mission Fund	18.016,30
Publications Fund	47.200,75
UCC Death Penalty Consultation	5.175,70
Equatorial Guinea	4.218,09
Native American Project	3.164,33
Sub-Total	4.807.013,03
Trust Assets	
WCRC Europe	191.079,26
Total	4.998.092,29

However, the large majority of these reserves are earmarked funds for specific programmes and projects as well as the CWM special reserve and the pension reserve.

The general reserve fund is 343,078 euro.

The pension reserve contains 1,213,663 euro as of 31 December 2022.

10. Investments

Investment	Funds Invested as of 31/12/2022	Value as of 31/12/2022
<u>OikoCredit</u>	2,182	2,182
KCD-Union (KD-Bank)	406,993	359,023
Fair World Funds (KD-Bank)	409,940	399,377
<u>Kinderzukunftsfonds (KD-Bank)*</u>	1,215,266	1,006,568
Collective Investment Reformed Church in Germany	1,000,000	1,000,000
Collective Investment Reformed Church in Germany - Pension	1,213,663	1,213,663
TOTAL	4,248,044	3,980,813

All investments are now in line with our guidelines on ethical and sustainable investments.

All in all, WCRC's investments amount to 4,248,000 euro, however, most are earmarked funds, including pensions in the amount of approximately 1,213,663 euro.

A newly set-up fund with the German KD-Bank had been identified for final investment of the pending funds previously invested in the US: The *KinderZukunftsFonds* (Children Future Fund). This fund is in risk category 3 (moderate) and has a higher percentage of shares than our first two investments with KD-Bank (KCD Sustainability and Fair World Funds). The funds were invested in the *KinderZukunftsFonds* on a quarterly basis between 2021 and 2022.

A total of 2.03 million euro has been invested in three funds with KD-Bank. While in 2022, prior to the war in Ukraine, results of all three funds with the German KD-Bank were favorable, all three suffered very significant losses by the end of 2022:

KCD Sustainability: -47,970

Fair World: -10,560

Children Future: -208,700

Total depreciation: -267,230

However, all two out of three have since started to recover with an ongoing upward trend:

Value as of May 2023:

KCD Sustainability: 409,892

Children Future: 1,061,284

Fair World: 376,274

As of May, the total market value is 1.85 million euro.

There is no immediate cause for concern since these are long-term investments, the funds are expected to recover, and the WCRC does not foresee a need for a withdrawal for liquidity reasons.

The pension reserves are invested in farmland and are not subject to the abovementioned risks. Pension obligations for all departing employees (except one) have been paid out in full.

11. Budget Plan 2023

The Executive Committee is to adopt the balanced 2023 budget.

It is not yet foreseeable whether a supplementary budget will have to be made in the course of the year. Should this be the case, it would be presented to the Finance Committee prior to approval by the Officers towards the end of the year.

The first quarter has not seen any unexpected developments.

The 2023 budget will require of us to be very careful stewards of our funds in order to achieve a positive result.

12. Budget Plan 2024

The budget for 2024 will be developed in the latter half of this year, with the Finance Committee reviewing the figures before submitting a balanced budget to the Officers' Committee for preliminary approval before year-end 2024, as has been the traditional process.

13. Recommendations

Based on all of the above, the Finance Committee recommends the following:

- The 2022 financial statement be approved.
- The 2022 Audit Report be accepted.
- The Acting General Secretary and the General Treasurer be exonerated for the budget, economic management, and asset administration of the WCRC for the accounting year 2022.
- The audit of the 2023 financial statement be carried out by the High Audit Office of the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*.
- The 2023 budget be approved.
- The officers be authorized to give preliminary approval to a balanced budget for 2024 subject to final approval at the 2024 Executive Committee meeting.
- Double-entry bookkeeping be implemented by budget year 2025.

14. Thanks

The excellent continuing work of Anna Krüger, now as administrator for finance and sustainability, and Gerhard Plenter, finance coordinator, should be noted with thanks.

Report of the General Council Planning Committee

Introduction

The Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches that met in May 2021 created a task group to lay the foundations for the next General Council. The task group was to take on the following responsibilities:

- to propose a location for a 2024 General Council.
- to identify sources of income and to present a balanced budget for the General Council.
- to create the conditions for the appointment of the necessary staff resources.
- to propose a theme and suggest a general programme structure.

After the reports presented by the General Council Task Group in 2023, the Executive Committee of WCRC decided:

- 1) Establishment of a General Council Planning Committee (GPCPC) that shall be responsible for the planning of the 27th General Council to be held in Thailand in 2025. Responsibilities include working with the WCRC staff to develop a detailed programme, timetable, budget, publications, discernment processes, and symbolic events of the General Council.

The General Council Planning Committee shall work with representatives of the host committee in Thailand on all aspects of the hosting operations, ensuring that the housing and conference facilities are adequate for the General Council. The General Council Planning Committee shall coordinate with the consortium of Asian churches and WCRC staff to ensure that the General Council budget is balanced.

The GPCPC is formed by the following persons: Dario Barolin (moderator), Najla Kassab, Prawate Khid-arn, Nancy Lin, Veronica Muchiri, Gerardo Oberman, Victoria Turner, Karen Georgia Thompson, Surapong Mitrakul, Hanns Lessing, Philip Vinod Peacock, Phil Tanis, and Nattee Kalcharnpiset (finance advisor).

- 2) The Officers' Committee, working with the General Council Planning Committee, is authorized to appoint a General Council Worship Committee to develop the worship services and spiritual aspects of the 2025 General Council.
- 3) The General Council was postponed until 2025 and Thailand was decided as the country where it should be held.

- 4) “Persevere in Your Witness” was adopted as the theme for the 2025 General Council.

Also it was recommended that Asian member churches shall form a consortium that will collectively support the General Council financially, ensuring that the agreed budget is fully covered.

Advances after the Last ExComm Meeting

- 1) A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 22 May 2022 between the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) on hosting the WCRC’s 27th General Council in 2025. In this agreement, Chiang Mai is indicated as the place where the Council should take place.
- 2) A Worship Committee was appointed.
- 3) Appointments needed:
 - a. As was already requested, it is necessary to appoint a General Council Coordinator. This person should be located in Asia, preferably in Chiang Mai, Thailand. A preliminary job description has been elaborated.
 - b. Having seen the different conditions for fundraising that we are facing, we strongly suggest also the appointment of a position for fundraising.
 - c. As before, an Administrator for the General Council (based in Hannover) should be hired.
 - d. Appointments will be made by the Personnel Committee/Officers of the WCRC
- 4) We understand that in the present circumstances a full participation of the member churches is necessary to accomplish the coming Council and to empower WCRC. In that sense, we worked on a policy of subsidies that ensure a just and equitable participation in and support of the Council. Subsidies will be limited upon the capacity obtained and it should not overpass it, so a balanced budget can be reached (see below: A Communion Budget for the Chiang Mai General Council).

The General Council Programme

The Number of General Council Meeting Days

The GCPC deliberated at great length over the number of days that the General Council would be held keep in mind the following factors:

- Business needed

- Programme
- Special Interest Groups
- Immersion/Exposure Programmes
- Budget

It was decided that the General Council would be held for a total of ten days including the meetings for special caucus groups. Special caucus groups would be those groups that met in pre-councils in previous General Council meetings.

Special Caucus Groups

The meetings for members of special caucus groups would be for two days at the beginning and then have two sessions integrated into the programme of the General Council.

The four special caucus groups would be:

- Women
- Youth
- Indigenous people
- People with disabilities

While these groups are in caucus, the other Council participants will attend workshops that offer training and perspectives to matters that are integral to the life of the Communion.

The General Council Date

The GCPC recommends that the 2025 General Council shall run over 10 days (including caucus groups). This is two days shorter than the Leipzig General Council (9 days plus 3 days for the pre-councils).

After careful consideration of many factors including weather, meaningful dates, local and global holidays, and availability of venue the GCPC agreed on two possible dates for the General Council:

- 21 to 30 October 2025
- 8 to 16 October 2025 (this date is very much needed in case the Dara Academy is the venue of the Council)

The final decision regarding the dates will be made in the first week of June.

Programmatic Outline

The programme would follow the five actions of the World Communion of Reformed Churches as defined in the current strategic plan, which are:

- Fostering a just communion
- Covenanting for justice
- Doing theology for transformation
- Engaging with God’s mission in areas of crisis
- Working together with all the partners that God give us

The draft day themes relate these actions to the General Council theme:

- Day 1 – Persevere in your witness (opening worship)
- Day 2 – Each special interest caucus decides on its own theme
- Day 3 – “Persevere in fostering a just communion”
- Day 4 – Exposure/Immersion Day
- Day 5 – “Persevere in covenanting for Justice”
- Day 6 – Reformation Sunday/Sunday Celebration
- Day 7 – “Persevere in doing theology for transformation”
- Day 8 – “Persevere in engaging God’s mission”
- Day 9 – “Persevere in working together with all the partners God provides”
- Day 10 – Persevere in your witness (closing communion)

Each day will be framed by liturgy and worship, of which Bible study is an integral part.

The discernment and consensus process will build upon the rules of order of the Leipzig General Council and follow the process of listening, discerning, and decision-making.

The working groups that prepare the programmatic listening sessions would structure their working papers according to the four verbs that determine the identity of the WCRC as a communion marked by discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being reformed.

Preparation of the Nomination and Public Issues Processes

During the last general councils, the Public Issues and Nomination committees had to work under enormous stress. Shortening the General Council will increase the pressure. The GCPC, therefore, proposes that the Executive Committee approves the appointment of a Leadership Advisory Group that will prepare the nomination process at the General Council and a Public Issues Planning Group:

- *Leadership Advisory Group:* The group shall discern the profiles of people needed to be considered for nomination to the Executive Committee and will accompany the process of nominations of General Council delegates in the member churches to ensure that suitable candidates will be present at the General Council meeting.

Rationale: The Nominating Committee is officially composed by the General Council. However, preparations to set up the nomination process for success could be started in advance. To function properly, the Executive Committee needs strong connections to member churches and expertise in certain areas of knowledge/ability. The WCRC needs to be strategic in ensuring the Executive Committee has the proper mix of leadership and talent to succeed (while not upsetting the other important balances). Close relations to the leadership of member churches are particularly important in times under the threat of budget cuts. A strategy is important; otherwise, the leadership of the WCRC will be more and more removed from member churches. We also should nurture the next generation of leaders and have leaders who are not static but are seeking justice and pushing the Communion forward.

- *Public Issues Planning Group:* The public issues process considers matters brought before the General Council by member churches. There are no stipulations in the WCRC Constitution or By-laws as to how this is done. The Public Issues Planning Group shall reach out to member churches to collect issues of concern, develop a methodology for the hearings, and develop a strategic approach to the public issues report.

Rationale: At past General Councils, the public issues process generated a multitude of General Council actions that could not adequately be followed up in the life of the Communion. The Public Issues Planning Group should, therefore, develop an approach that assures the member churches that their concerns have been heard but also leads to General Council actions that allow an impactful strategic implementation by the Communion.

These committees will be appointed by the officers of the WCRC

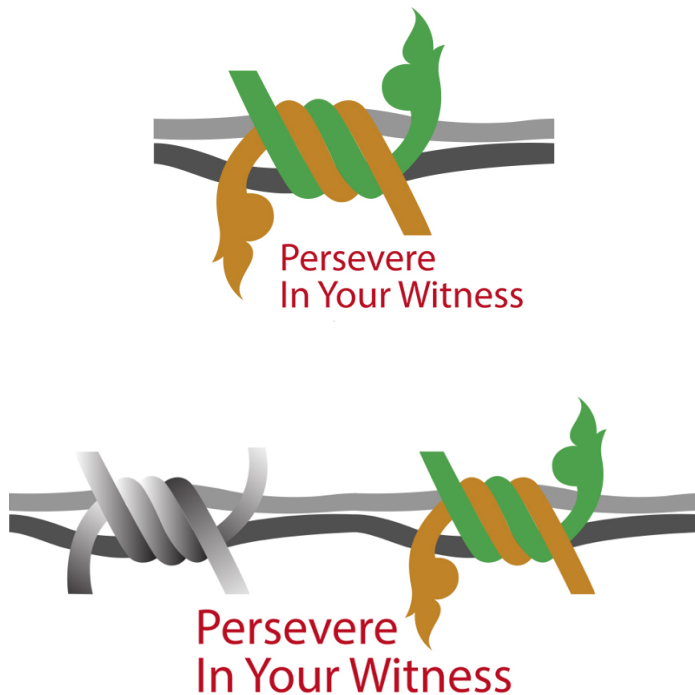
Immersion Programme

The immersion programme is still under discussion with the Church of Christ in Thailand. One option would be an exposure trip to the Myanmar border to express in solidarity with the refugees from Myanmar which would be conducted on the Saturday of the General Council. This would be done along with partner churches in Myanmar, local hosts, and the Council for World Mission.

The Logo

An important part of any General Council is its logo. As the primary visual symbol of the meeting it should both convey the spirit of the gathering, as well as the place in which the Communion is gathering. Thus, when developing logos for both the 2017 and the 2025 Councils, locally-based artists/designers were invited to submit their concepts.

After reviewing a number of submissions, the decision was made to work with artist Nai Glinhom, from Chiang Mai, to create the logo for the 2025 General Council. Below is the result, along with her thoughts on it:



Artist's Statement

I was asked to design a logo with Thai or northern Thai patterns included. The title provided me the sense of obstacles and problems that we all have to face in our journey while we work to bring Good News to the world.

My thoughts develop from thorns to a single bud of barbwire. Barbwire itself is used for separation, division, and protection. When we see a barbwire fence ahead we would normally avoid or find other way to achieve our goal.

This logo reminds us that amid the adversity, suffering, or trouble we must persevere in our journey to witness what we believe. Do not give up because we see difficulty waiting ahead but keep fighting forward to overcome any hardship in our journey with Jesus Christ.

—Nai GLINHOM

A Communion Budget for the Chiang Mai General Council

Every General Council is different. The WCRC gathers in different regions and under the conditions of a particular country. The local conditions have a strong impact on how a General Council unfolds. In some countries, we can convene in church facilities. In others, we need to finance hotel accommodation. Travel costs differ drastically. Much depends on the resources of the host churches. At the last two general councils, the Communion was blessed that churches in the United States and Germany took care of large parts of the expenses. These contributions made it easy for the WCRC to live out its commitment to full and just participation. We had the funds to fully subsidize the participants from many churches in the Global South without requesting strong efforts in local fundraising.

For everyone involved in the organization, it was clear that the General Councils in Grand Rapids and Leipzig had been exceptions. In preparing for the 2025 General Council in Chiang Mai, we are, therefore, faced with the task of mobilizing the Communion at large to raise the necessary funds.

This situation requires a new fundraising approach. No member church in the Communion can raise funds that would get anywhere near the contributions that the hosts raised for the Councils in Grand Rapids and Leipzig. The member churches in Asia see their particular responsibility to support the General Council. But they cannot do it alone. As the WCRC, we must learn that a global event like the General Council requires the support of the whole Communion in all parts of the world.

In Grand Rapids and Leipzig, it was a few donors that provided the largest part of the budget. For the General Council in Chiang Mai, we approach all of our churches and hope for multifold donations. Often, churches cannot transfer from existing funds but have to request contributions from local congregations and individual donors. This requires a new fundraising approach. Local fundraising is much more specific and requests donors to support very specific projects. Some churches already consider making contributions for particular meals or selected General Council activities. Others might pay for travel and accommodation for seconded staff or for selected groups of delegates from churches with which they already have a

relationship. There will be numerous opportunities to sponsor the General Council. We call upon all member churches to contribute to the General Council. Even small donations will help us.

The WCRC is committed to the principle of full and just participation. In the past, we have especially supported the participation of women and young people to achieve the balances that are required by the Constitution.

At the moment, we do not yet have such resources. We, therefore, call upon the Communion to donate to the planned “Just Participation” funds that will support women and youth delegates who otherwise would not have the chance to participate in the Council.

A communion budget for the General Council also requires contributions from all General Council delegates. Travel, accommodation, and the General Council proceedings cannot be financed in total from the central budget. The General Council Planning Committee, therefore, proposes an increased registration fee that makes a significant contribution to the overhead of the meeting and a minimum contribution from every delegate who requests a subsidy:

- The *registration fee* (to cover the costs for travel and accommodation for General Council staff and consultants, stage design, IT needs, communication etc.) shall be 300 euros for subsidized delegates and at least 500 euros for self-payers (the General Council Planning Committee requests the Executive Committee to consider an amount of 750 euros).
- The *minimum contribution* for every delegate who asks for a subsidy for travel and accommodation shall be 700 euros (a reduction shall only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Priority shall be given to women and youth).

The General Council Planning Committee is aware that it will be a challenge to many member churches to raise these amounts. The committee, however, feels that the World Communion needs to build a culture of ownership that also includes financial contributions. Without such engagement, it will be extremely difficult to organize General Councils in 2025 and the years after.

The WCRC becomes relevant by organizing processes of global discernment. The deep engagement that we have seen at General Councils in the past requires that we meet face-to-face. To make sure that we can organize such gatherings also in the future, we need the support of all our member churches! We still have two full years until the General Council and appeal to all the member churches to begin developing fundraising immediately. With proper engagement, it should be possible in most countries to raise the requested funds.

As a Communion committed to the value of full and just participation, we are also aware that we need to support member churches in the task of General Council fundraising. The General Council Coordinator, therefore, shall supervise the production of resources for the fundraising and call upon the regions to identify fundraising consultants that will accompany the churches in their fundraising activities.

Fundraising for the General Council

To successfully carry out the General Council in 2025, we must guarantee an income of at least 2 million euros. Additional funds would allow additional activities and increased comfort (e.g. accommodation in single rooms).

With the measures proposed here, we are on the way towards a balanced budget for the General Council:

GC contributions from members, Reserves	806.000
Registration Fees	165.000
Subsidies (300 x 300 euros)	90.000
Self-Payers (150 x 500 Euros)	75.000
Minimum Contributions of Subsidy Applicants (300 x 700 euros)	210.000
Donations from Members Churches (including in-kind contributions)	500.000
Donations from Ecumenical Partners (CWM, EMW, BftW, OPM, FAP, EKD etc.)	350.000
TOTAL	2.031.000

Recommendations

Length of the General Council

The Executive Committee approves that:

- 1) the 2025 General Council will gather for ten days
- 2) the caucuses of the special interest groups shall be included in the General Council programme
- 3) the following groups shall convene in special caucus groups: women, youth, indigenous people, people with disabilities.

Nomination and Public Issues Processes

The Executive Committee requests the Officers' Committee to appoint two planning groups that prepare the work of the Nominations and the Public Issues committees at the General Council:

- 1) The *Leadership Advisory Group* shall discern the profiles of people needed to be considered for nomination to the Executive Committee and will accompany the process of nominations of General Council delegates in the member churches to ensure that suitable candidates will be present at the General Council meeting.
- 2) The *Public Issues Planning Group* shall reach out to member churches to collect issues of concern, develop a methodology for the hearings, and develop a strategic approach to the public issues report.

The General Council Budget

The Executive Committee approves the creation of a Communion Budget for the 2025 General Council and affirms:

- 1) the development of a fundraising system for the General Council that allows for the donation of smaller contributions for dedicated activities of the General Council. Such a system shall include the necessary instruments for accounting and communication with the donors;
- 2) the production of resources for fundraising within the member churches and with potential partners that articulate the relevance of the General Council for different audiences;
- 3) that all General Council delegates pay a registration fee of 300 euros for subsidized delegates and 500 / 750 euros for self-supporting delegates (please indicate which amount you will find most appropriate);
- 4) a minimum contribution of 700 euros from every delegate who asks for a subsidy for travel and accommodation;
- 5) the creation of a Just Participation Fund that will support the participation of women and youth delegates. The Executive Committee calls upon all member churches to support this fund generously;
- 6) that the regions under the supervision of the General Council Coordinator identify fundraising consultants that will accompany the churches in their fundraising activities for the General Council.

Report of The Committee

I. Background

At its meeting in May 2022, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) Executive Committee adopted the following action:

Appointed a Committee that shall consist of individuals from the General Secretary Search Committee, Sustainability Task Group, and Strategic Plan Programme Group, with the Collegial General Secretariat participating as *ex officio* members.

This Committee is mandated to:

- focus on the short- and mid-term sustainability challenges described in this report;
- explore ways in which the WCRC can develop a model that allows flexibility in collaboration with regions, member churches, and partners to pursue the vision and mission of the WCRC;
- present a report with proposal(s) to the 2023 Executive Committee meeting on how the conditions can be created that would:
 - allow the election of a general secretary;
 - assure sufficient staff capacity to collaborate and to coordinate the work of the WCRC.

The Officers' Committee approved the following members of The Committee at their meeting in October 2022: Rathnakara Sadananda (moderator), Dietmar Arends, Dario Barolin, Raíssa Brasil, Anna Case-Winters, Najla Kassab, Lungile Mpetsheni, Yvette Noble Bloomfield, Setri Nyomi, Karen Georgia Thompson, and Johann Weusmann (along with the Collegial General Secretariat as *ex officio*).

II. Work and Methodology

All of The Committee's meetings were held virtually, the first in December 2022. The mandate of The Committee was reviewed and perspectives from representatives of each of the following were presented: Finance Committee, Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG), General Secretary Search Committee (GSSC), and Collegial General Secretariat. (CGS) Discussion followed with the three important issues rising to the surface:

- 1) to bring clarity on where we're going, as soon as possible, especially on the leadership of the Communion;
- 2) go to the people, to the pews, network, collaborate, build communication systems, global-regional-members-congregations;
- 3) bring these relationships and fundraising together so we can have clarity as an institution; Communion is giving in the sense of supporting and

encouraging each other in a new way. What is ecumenism with both communion and justice coming together and the relationships and funding? Trusted, committed, partnerships, and journeying together.

The Committee met again in January 2023. They discussed and approved a draft proposal to divide The Committee into three working groups to tackle the issues as identified:

- 1) Developing the Working Model: Adapting Leadership and Structures
- 2) Going to the People: Improving the Engagement of Regions and Member Churches
- 3) Reaching Pulpits and the Pews: Strengthening the Financial Sustainability of the WCRC

From the end of January through to the writing of this report, the three working groups met as necessary to develop their sections of the full report. In both February and April, The Committee met in full to hear draft reports and provide commentary on them. In early May the draft of this report was presented to The Committee, which reviewed and agreed to present it to the Executive Committee for deliberation.

III. Developing the Working Model: Adapting Leadership and Structures

A. Tasks

Working group one developed proposals that respond to the following questions:

- In-depth assessment of the current CGS model:
 - How does the CGS work today?
 - What would have been different if there was a general secretary?
- Proposal for a Leadership model for the WCRC until the 2025 General Council and beyond (election of a general secretary, the continuation of the Collegial General Secretariat (CGS), or any other model etc.)
- An informed decision about the feasibility of the election of a general secretary requires an impact assessment in the following areas:
 - Operational budget: Does the ability to finance the general secretary salary require staff redundancies?
 - Programme budget: What is the impact of fundraising for the general secretary salary on the ability to run programmes?
 - General Council budget: What is the impact of fundraising for the general secretary salary on the ability to finance the 2025 General Council?

To allow an informed decision on the question of a possible continuation of the CGS until the General Council or beyond, the proposal should clarify the following points:

- The general perception of a collegial leadership model

- Workload: Responsibilities as executive secretaries and taking up the work of the CGS
- Accountability within the leadership model: To whom will the CGS report?
- Representation of the CGS in WCRC governance structures and the Personnel Committee
- The internal structure of the CGS (Is there a structure needed to be the point of contact and accountability? Should there be a coordinating function?)
- Labour law: Who has the right to act as an employer? Who has the right to give direction to WCRC employees, to conduct personnel reviews, to act as arbitrator in the event of disagreements between staff?

B. Methodology

The working group carried out a written survey among the WCRC staff and verbal feedback from some ecumenical partners. In the one for the staff, the members of the CGS, administrators, and interns responded to certain questions that would enable us to assess properly. The responses received pointed to some issues for which it seemed necessary to ask two members of the team to visit the Hannover office and engage in further conversations with the staff. President Najla Kassab and General Treasurer Johann Weusmann undertook this visit. It is based on these processes that the working group based its conclusions and recommendations.

C. Affirmations

From both the survey and the visit to the offices, the working group is filled with appreciation for the staff in Hannover for the tremendous work done and the achievements under the leadership of the CGS. Much of these thanks go to the three colleagues who constituted the CGS until Muna Nassar joined recently. Through the different phases of the CGS, these colleagues did a wonderful job. The phases identified are:

- 1) Emergency phase
- 2) COVID-19 phase
- 3) Post-COVID phase

In the emergency phase, when the immediate past general secretary completed his term, there was a vacuum. The three colleagues who were executive secretaries rose to the occasion to save the WCRC. They took on the responsibilities of the general secretary and did a good job at running the WCRC effectively on top of their normal responsibilities.

In the COVID-19 phase, going into the post-COVID phase, the office was able to run with good programmes under the leadership of the CGS. New programmes were

engaged in, funds were raised for them, and relationships with member churches strengthened.

The strengthening of programmes led to the addition of a new executive secretary for mission and advocacy, and a new staff person to be stationed in Rome in the Ecumenical Reformed Office to enhance ecumenical work, besides a third staff who will join soon to be a programme coordinator for gender justice

The CGS model enabled each executive staff member to speak more forthrightly with authority in decision-making processes; therefore, leadership capacity has grown.

These and other positives were noted and lifted up with gratitude. It is appreciated what the CGS and the executive staff who constitute the CGS have done. They did this literally working 150%. They had their programmes and operations which they were fully doing and in addition, had the general secretary's responsibilities.

D. Causes for Concern

The challenges of the CGS noted through the surveys as well as through the office visit were significant. A similar observation can be made of the informal feedback received from partners.

In the emergency and COVID-19 phases, the CGS provided much-needed leadership. As the post-COVID stage unfolded challenges were emerging. These include:

- 1) The perception of a new form of hierarchy (a block of executive staff with power, and all others in a lower strata) in the office which is making for division which could be unhealthy.
- 2) This is compounded by the fact that at the creation of the CGS, administrative assistants were "promoted" to administrators without providing a clear understanding of these new responsibilities or lines of supervision.
- 3) At the same time, the number of administrators was reduced, and one position (the administrator to the general secretariat) has not been successfully filled (with two attempts from August 2021 to October 2022, with the position vacant since then as a full review is being conducted). All staff were thus additionally burdened taking up various parts of these responsibilities, including office management.
- 4) Given the sheer volume of work that the members of the CGS had to do, not everything was done effectively; for example, planning activities well in advance for effectiveness. This also meant programme activities cost more. As travels were arranged much closer to the events, airfares were also higher.

- 5) The attention paid to interns was limited and therefore raised questions on how we can improve the internship programme to fulfil the reason for its establishment.

The task of a general secretary includes directing and coordinating. Under the CGS, the directing part of the CGS went quite well. The coordinating part, including among themselves, had challenges.

As a result of the absence of an administrator for the general secretariat (in whose portfolio this responsibility sits), and a lack of capacity by staff to take this particular item up, there have not been any formal work assessments of staff. We do note that there is currently a process to restructure the administrative support of the office and affirm this; we further encourage the hiring of an administrator for the general secretariat as soon as possible, along with adding an administrator for the General Council.

The expectations of the CGS are marked by a contradiction. On the one hand, the Collegial General Secretariat was tasked to take the lead in one of the most profound transitions in the organization's recent history. On the other hand, the CGS was considered an "interim" solution, as if it could be ended at any point. This lack of clarity hampers leadership in the WCRC and puts a significant psychological burden on the members of the CGS.

There is a lack of clarity on the constitutional authority of the CGS. As an interim arrangement, this is not problematic. But to continue it, one must take some decisions which may include a constitutional review. The lack of clarity includes issues around labour law. For example who among the CGS is considered the employer? And who is the ultimate person of responsibility, especially for outside enquires? Any decision on a possible continuation of the CGS model should, therefore, include clarification of this matter.

E. Conclusions on Leadership Models

The working group is very grateful to the members of the CGS for stepping in at the right time to provide leadership for the WCRC. It was meant to be a short-term stop-gap arrangement. The working group notes that the Strategic Plan places much premium on programmes. This is going on well. We need to keep the current executive staff focused on doing their programmes well, including the fundraising elements.

It is also acknowledged that many of the issues raised above are not unique to the CGS but pre-dated their tenure, pointing to a structural issue that needs to be addressed. It is understood that a process is currently underway to review systems,

supervising lines, and responsibilities of the administrators which should address at least several of these concerns.

Given all the concerns and challenges raised, as well as the fact that members of the CGS are actually working extra hard to keep WCRC running, it is time to adjust our approach with a view to address meeting the challenges named above. We seek to enhance management, accountability, and capacity at all levels. Many of the current challenges can be met by designating one among the CGS as an acting general secretary. The manner of operating among the executives would still be collaborative, but this person would function as a “first among equals” to lead in the areas where it is beneficial to have one person as the clearly designated leader.

For example, this model addresses questions of accountability within the WCRC leadership model as well as the representation of the CEO in WCRC governance structures and the Personnel Committee. This is even more important because the WCRC is in a very critical moment as it prepares for the 2025 General Council and as it envisions its future.

It should also be noted that the hiring of a third administrator—along with some reconfigurations to the responsibilities of the current two positions—will go a long way in increasing the capacity of the office.

F. Staffing Structures

A decade ago, the WCRC moved from Geneva to Hannover, in part to relieve financial pressures on the costs of “doing business” in one of the most expensive cities in the world. While the finances of the WCRC have since stabilized—and the reserves grown to healthy levels—financial pressures remain, especially in the post-COVID era of inflation.

At the same time, the WCRC is a global organization, with most of its members located in the Global South and its executive staff hailing from around the world.

The location of both the core operational staff (including the general secretary) and the programmatic staff was discussed, with questions such as the following raised: What might it look like to spread staff around the world? What are the financial implications? How could staff members be justly compensated in countries of varying economic levels? How would the organization operate in this way?

Two scenarios were developed, one with all staff remaining in Hannover, and the other “globalizing” the staff, with the core organizational staff remaining in Hannover and the rest spread around the world.

It was decided that these initial findings warranted more research and discussion before any proposal could be brought in a formal report. It is understood that this proposal does not envision relocating any of the current staff, but that this consideration is for future configurations. The two models considered will be given to the Officers' Committee and to the Strategic Programme Planning Group for continued consideration. Any staff reconfigurations would not be implemented until after the next General Council.

IV. Going to the People: Improving the Engagement of Regions and Member Churches

Working group two was charged with developing proposals in four areas:

- 1) Evaluation of WCRC programmes
- 2) Involving member churches and regions in programmes
- 3) Preparing for the 2025 General Council
- 4) Working with all the partners God provides

The work of this group had a decided overlap with the ongoing oversight responsibilities of the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG). As such, 1) please refer to the SPPG Report for details on the programmatic activities of the WCRC along with several recommendations and 2) please excuse any repetition from the SPPG Report found below.

A. Evaluation of the WCRC Programme

The programmatic work of the WCRC is focused through five areas:

- 1) Cultivating a Just Communion
- 2) Covenanting for Justice
- 3) Doing Theology for Transformation
- 4) Engaging God's Mission in a Context of Crisis
- 5) Working with All the Partners God Provides

These programme areas bring a good structure with clarity about intentionality and the appropriate focus of the programmes within each area. The work being done is considerable, especially given current capacity challenges. Evaluation of this work can be done through our so-called "four verbs:"

- 1) Discerning: What is going on?
- 2) Confessing: What are we saying?
- 3) Witnessing: What are we doing?
- 4) Being Reformed: What are we changing?

Besides using the four verbs, the SPPG assesses the programmatic work through these questions: what worked well, what did not, and how can we improve?

It should be noted here that the WCRC Strategic Plan is on track for a successful completion, and that cooperation with key funding partners is deepening and expanding (allowing the addition of two new programmatic staff).

The Collegial General Secretariat (CGS), currently composed of the three programme executives and the executive for communications, has made these successes possible. This leadership model has proven to be very workable, fully collaborative and collegial, and very effective in getting the work done. However, there is a challenge regarding the workload of each executive which must be addressed. The SPPG Report has specific recommendations which include finding sufficient administrative support and developing a long-term strategy for funding sustainability.

B. Involving Member Churches and Regions in Programmes

Attention must be given to the regions and their connection to the Communion as a whole, including their financial support and other forms of participation. The regions provide a particular connection to member churches and not having consistency in the regions that effectively supports the work of the WCRC is problematic. Some regions are doing better than others. How do we reach out to the regions, and how do we reach the member churches? If the work of the Executive Committee is not communicating to the leadership of the member churches and their regions, the work of the WCRC will neither make an impact nor be relevant. The meaning of “communion” and its commitment is at stake.

How is wider participation possible, including in the planning processes? How can we develop processes that will allow programmatic ideas to come from all regions? Several ideas were presented:

- 1) Include representatives from the regions in the programme planning process, in addition to Executive Committee members from the regions. Sometimes there is no overlap between the two, and those leading in the regions do not see their hopes carried forward in the process.
- 2) Consider locating some of the programmatic work in particular regions where appropriate. This would enlarge the capacity of the Communion and also strengthen relations with the regions.
- 3) In planning for General Council, we should consider what we have already received from the regions in the COVID & Beyond process, and bring that input to the fore.
- 4) In upcoming regional meetings, there should be a standing agenda item for regional requests for solidarity of the wider communion, combined with a process of implementation.

C. Preparing for the 2025 General Council

Programmatic content will be a key driver to, through, and beyond the 2025 General Council. This year will feature four key consultations that set the Communion on its course to the Council:

- 1) Council Theme: A consultation on the General Council theme, “Persevere in Your Witness” will bring together theologians, biblical scholars, activists, artists, and more to develop resources to be shared throughout the Communion.
- 2) Beyond COVID: The culminating conference of the COVID & Beyond process will be held face-to-face, harvesting the deep and rich online conversations that brought the Communion together during the pandemic.
- 3) Empire: This key term in the Accra Confession will be considered in today’s realities, asking “What are the theological aspects of this at a time of immense and concentrated political, economic, and military power?”
- 4) Identity: The WCRC was purposefully formed as a “communion” but what does that mean?

D. Working with All the Partners God Provides

While the WCRC works with a variety of partners in many and varied activities, a review of the work with ecumenical partners was a key focus, specifically the ecumenical dialogues. Particularly helpful in this discussion were observations about *how* the WCRC engages with these partners and the distinctive aims and values brought to these engagements.

There is an acknowledgement of the reality of a tension between doing bilateral dialogues and working for the unity of the whole church. Bilateral dialogues tend to focus on confessional identities and differences and may bring the two partners closer and to a better understanding, but they have a narrow focus and may not move us ahead with the multiple ecumenical partners. The WCRC does engage in bilateral dialogues but keeps pushing for multilaterals like the JDDJ² conversations that include Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, and Reformed communions.

The WCRC does not see doctrinal agreement as the goal and basis of our unity. Our unity is a gift of God already there to be received. We do not expect that there will be complete agreement in doctrine; our goal is not formulating one confession that all will agree to. Rather our goal is to express our unity in receiving each other’s

² JDDJ: Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, initially signed by the Catholics and Lutherans which states that the churches now share “a common understanding of our justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ.” The WCRC signed onto the document at the 2017 General Council.

traditions—differences and all—with openness. Even in our own Communion, we have not insisted that there be one confession to which all will subscribe. Reformed folk tend to have collections of confessions from different times and contexts.

Another operating principle for the WCRC is that we do not separate theology from ethics or politics, that our commitment to justice is foundational, and there is an “integral relation between justification and justice.” One of our identifying markers is our conviction that we are “Called to Communion, Committed to Justice.” That is why when it came to discussion of the doctrine of justification in the JDDJ, process we had to stop and make some connections. We posed the question: What does justification have to do with justice? This continues to be an operating principle in all dialogues.

As Reformed people, the WCRC also focuses on communal, collegial discernment—avoiding hierarchical impositions of authority and also avoiding unhealthy individualism.

The upcoming opening of the Ecumenical Office in Rome, in partnership with the Church of Scotland and the Waldensian Evangelical Church, was also noted as an excellent opportunity for new and deeper ecumenical relationships in collaboration, cooperation, and action.

V. Reaching Pulpits and the Pews: Strengthening the Financial Sustainability of the WCRC

Working group three was tasked with several interrelated topics to evaluate, namely:

- 1) Reconnecting with membership
- 2) Diversifying communications
- 3) Strengthening regions
- 4) Developing fundraising strategies
- 5) Cooperating with ecumenical partners

Through the several meetings of the group, it became apparent that the success of fundraising was dependent upon making progress in the first three areas, all of which could also be grouped under the larger umbrella of “strengthening the communion”—and that the key to success was to build and deepen relationships. It became clear time and again that the regions should play a very special role in this process.

The group agreed that the topics could not all be dealt with in depth in the time available and tried to limit itself to a realistic agenda. Discussion of the last item—cooperating with ecumenical partners—was therefore dispensed.

A. Reconnecting with Membership

It was reported that 40% (100) of the WCRC's member churches have been unresponsive in paying dues since 2018 or replying to outreach efforts in the last five months. While it was noted that this is neither new nor out of the ordinary for global ecumenical organizations, it was also agreed that additional attempts should be made to engage with non-responsive members while also strengthening bonds with those members who are more connected to the Communion.

For all members, it was agreed that there should be a focus on what members expect from the Communion—and then to develop ways in which to deliver on these expectations. These might not necessarily (and likely shouldn't) be something such as "I need financial grants for projects" (as the Communion has done through the Partnership Fund), but instead this engagement should explore what connections, networks, and partnerships would be useful, as well as what types of resources would be most helpful along with ways in which to deliver them effectively. For instance, how might a Communion-based prayer network be created? How does connecting academic theologians assist the member churches? What impact does the visit of a WCRC representative or delegation have on a member? Etc.

It was also agreed that the question of membership dues payment should be separated from engaging with the churches. As stated bluntly in the WCRC constitution, article VI (emphasis added):

The Executive Committee may suspend the membership of a member church for actions in violation of Article II - Basis, Article III - Values, or Article IV - Identity, Mission and Purposes of this Constitution *or for persistent failure to support or communicate with the organization*, subject to the conditions stated in the Bylaws.

Given the current challenges faced by churches around the world, it was agreed that the inability of a church to pay its dues should not provoke such a harsh response, and that all efforts should be made to re-engage those churches that have apparently drifted away from the Communion. Put another way, the driving question was: How can we maximize engagement while not penalizing those who cannot meet the financial demands of dues? As the Communion is for closer fellowship (*koinonia*), fuller life, and greater unity and peace, therefore we need to emphasize that fundraising is about fuller participation.

There was some talk about revisiting the categories of membership, as the constitution only allows for the suspension of members. Perhaps a "non-active" category could be created, noting that without any response from a church, it is also difficult to suspend or release them from membership.

An obvious means through which members can be engaged is the 2025 General Council, with these events traditionally generating an increase in interest. This is even more helpful in that it is not only an attractive event for members but can also be a means through which the “why” question can be both explored and answered, especially as the Council will discern and set the course of the Communion and its work for the following years. Plans are already underway to engage in two discernment processes leading to the Council, one focused on what it means to be a communion and the other on justice (specifically “empire”). A communication plan is also being prepared with an emphasis on increasing engagement.

As will be seen in the sections below, member engagement is an important part of both communication and regional responsibilities. Three other points of contact are notable as the Communion works to reconnect with its members:

- 1) WCRC elected officials: both the officers (who are geographically diverse) and the members of the Executive Committee should be actively engaged to reach out to the member churches in their areas, as well as to act as a liaison when needed.
- 2) Key church leaders: there are members that are both engaged in the Communion and also have partnerships with other members, many of which may not be as involved. Building on these natural networks—specifically working with and through the church leaders—would strengthen the Communion in a number of ways.
- 3) Regional Councils: this is another key point of connection with member churches which will be addressed below.

B. Diversifying Communications

The overarching question that drove the discussion about communications was: How does our communication work to strengthen the Communion, to create a space for churches to live out being communion? This included the notion that effective communication is not one-way but engaging, eliciting responses, discussions, and actions.

The challenge for the WCRC on this is twofold: the means and capacity.

The ways in which to communicate are many and varied, with different groups preferring different ways in which to connect. And, while the WCRC is composed of member churches, there is a desire to work to communicate with the congregations in these churches—to be able to engage them in the work and witness of the Communion at the grassroots level.

On a limited budget and with less than a full-time position dedicated to communications, it is apparent that priorities must be set in what is communicated

and the ways in which communication is done, that assistance must be found, and that networks need to be developed. This will all take time, but with the current communication executive's term coming to an end in 2024 there is an opportunity to review how to both focus and increase the capacity in communications.

There was also discussion about the connection between communication and development, especially with this position. The job description of the current executive position has only this on fundraising: "To support WCRC's fundraising strategies and efforts." Outside of assigning the general secretary and general treasurer responsibility for the "preparation of the annual budget" (Article XIV, Section B), the WCRC constitution is silent on fundraising responsibilities, although there are these two points in the advertised job description for the general secretary:

7. Supervise programmatic fundraising;
8. Raise funds for core budget and overall Communion needs;

Fundraising, however (as can be seen below, in section D.), is an enormous task and cannot be placed on a single individual. Consideration should thus be given to whether an "executive secretary for communication and development" would be an effective way forward—and is almost essential if the Collegial General Secretariat continues. This could, of course, change the dynamic in which the WCRC communicates, placing more of an emphasis on how funds can be raised (either directly or indirectly) through each piece of media.

Regardless of the specific job description for the communication staff person, communication should be diversified in several ways:

- 1) Regional councils should become a regular point of contact to share stories both from and to the global office.
- 2) Networks should be developed to support communication efforts, especially with member church communication departments, to increase the flow of stories between the Communion and its members (again, both ways); member churches should also be invited to second their communications staff on a part time basis.
- 3) The types of media regularly used should be increased, especially with the addition of video (which should be generated even from the grassroots levels following set guidelines); a network of Instagrammers should be developed to share pictures from around the Communion (again, following set guidelines).

In addition, priorities need to be set, in conjunction with the strategic plan and programmatic work but also taking into account the 2025 General Council, fundraising goals, and organizational needs.

C. Strengthening Regions

The WCRC has official area councils in the following regions:

- Africa (ACRC);
- Europe (WCRC Europe);
- Latin America (AIPRAL);
- North America and the Caribbean (CANAAAC);
- North-East Asia (NEAAC).

Two existing area councils have not yet been authorized:³

- Indonesia;
- Middle East.

Member churches in the following areas are not yet organized in a regional structure:

- South Asia,
- South-East Asia
- Pacific

Each regional council is unique, with their own histories, informing their identities and sense of calling. Diversity also exists within each region, coming from different theological, economic, and political backgrounds. This both enriches but also challenges the work of each region.

The regions have a vital role in the life of the Communion. The current strategic plan defines the regions as important points of connection between the secretariat and member churches: “All programmatic activities will strengthen the regions, engaging member churches with their regional councils and engaging regional councils both with each other and the secretariat” (Organizational Goal 13).

To fulfill the plan’s goal, there have been periodic efforts to strengthen the relationship between the global office and the area councils, including a meeting in Hannover in 2017 and a pair of virtual meetings in 2022, along with the planned regularizing of meetings in 2023.

³ Article XVI of the WCRC Constitution allows the creation of Regional Councils: “To promote the closest possible community and cooperation among member churches in a particular area of the world, and the effectiveness of the total work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the General Council may authorize the organization of a Regional Council composed of the member churches in that defined geographical area.” The organization of Regional Councils “shall be effected by the member churches within the area, in conformity with the Constitution and Bylaws of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.” They are “accountable to the General Council through its appointed administrative structures.”

But more proactive and cooperative work needs to become a part of the rhythm of both the global and regional offices to meet the needs of the Communion as a whole. For instance, the role of the regions regarding the overall objectives of the Communion have not always been clear, and the global office has not always proactively connected with regional leadership when implementing programmatic work in a specific area. At the same time, the ability of the regions to provide the global office with the current state of member churches—and their needs—has not been realized.

But it is imperative that regional councils be a critical point of contact with member churches and a communication conduit with the Communion as a whole. It is impossible for the global office to build deep relationships with all of its 230+ member churches; regions, however, have a chance to do so, if resourced effectively.

It is thus recommended that the roles, responsibilities, and activities of the regions be better defined, especially in the following areas:

- 1) The ways in which the regions and general secretariat cooperate on programmatic activities as defined by the WCRC Strategic Plan—and to what extent (and shape) each region crafts their own strategic plan;
- 2) How the regions serve as a connector between member churches in their areas, including: 1) serving as a two-way communication conduit and 2) being in regular touch with members (including the updating of leadership and contact information through a shared database);
- 3) The means through which the regions are properly resourced, financially, with staff, or with other means;
- 4) How regions relate to each other, through cooperative activities, sharing of resources, etc.

At the same time, the diversity of the regions must be kept in mind. In different regions, there will have to be different strategies describing how it engages with the global, how it reaches out to the local. Each region needs its own customized approach.

D. Developing Fundraising Strategies

It is no secret that the long-term financial sustainability of the WCRC is a huge challenge. As the Communion is not the only ecumenical body experiencing this situation, it makes it especially critical that this situation be addressed to ensure the long-term existence of the Communion. Thus, the question that drove the discussion on this topic was: How do we build the resources to make the Communion work in the long-term?

It should be noted that while much of the discussion centered on fundraising ideas, the sustainability of the Communion rests on more than just money. There are ways in which members (and others) can contribute to the life of the Communion that do not necessitate financial transfers. A “post-colonial” imagining of how members can contribute to the life and work of the Communion needs to be undertaken. A key part of this is a sustainability audit, which would allow members to note ways in which they could contribute to the work and witness of the WCRC, whether financially, in-kind, or through other means. This entails an open effort to listen to members, building relationships in the process.

The way in which the WCRC is structured should also be undertaken. Currently, all global staff are based in Hannover. The savings in personnel costs made by moving to Hannover from Geneva nearly a decade ago have now been exhausted.

Regarding the raising of funds, there is an echo from the diversification of communications, as each member church has its own unique structure which impacts ways in which the WCRC can seek funds. For instance, financial resources from several European members are distributed through ecumenical institutions (which include more than just WCRC members); in the United States, global mission offices often have more resources than members’ secretariats; and in Asia, the Presbyterian model is so effectively inhabited that the financial resources rest within individual congregations. The possibilities of tapping members’ reserves that are dedicated to specific work, as well as foundations that would support the Communion are two other areas that have yet to be fully explored. Therefore, the approaches to fundraising necessitate a variety of approaches and varying amounts of resources and time.

In each, however, it is imperative that relationships be developed. This takes time, sometimes quite a bit of it. It is thus important that a fundraising strategy be developed that is multi-tiered as well as focused on increasing the participation of members in support of the Communion; creativity is also of the essence.

None of this negates Communion-wide fundraising efforts, such as the annual appeal and the developing Reformation/WCRC Sunday, both of which should not only continue but be expanded.

As has been noted, effective fundraising necessitates the commitment of individuals to carry out the work. While officers and Executive Committee members, as well as key leaders of member churches, should be enlisted in this effort, the coordination—and leadership—of WCRC staff is essential. This could manifest itself in a new executive secretary for communication and development, especially if the CGS continues as the leadership model for the Communion; but if the Communion moves back to a general secretary, then that person simply must make this a priority of her

work, coordinating, of course, with the already effective and ongoing efforts of the general treasurer.

VI. Recommendations for Consideration

Answering the mandate, The Committee has felt that the energy should be focused on engaging the whole Communion, calling them to fuller participation, and energizing relationships so that the Communion gathers in full strength together in 2025 to own and chart a new path for the WCRC.

The inadequacies, short comings, frailties, and vulnerabilities of the structure are evident and thus need urgent attention, in the context of post-COVID new normal, war and recession, ecological crisis, and the challenges that the ecumenical movement faces. To make the WCRC relevant to our contemporary times the question of post-colonial/post-COVID critique of our structure, programme, and being is necessary.

Based on the above report, the Committee recommends the following for consideration by the Executive Committee (not all of which necessarily need formal action):

A. Reconnecting with Membership

- 1) The Constitution and Membership Committee reviews categories of membership in the constitution and bylaws to allow a greater diversity of levels of engagement, including how membership within the regional councils functions.
- 2) The Executive Committee (or an appointed subcommittee) 1) reviews the current levels of membership dues, 2) considers ways in which these dues can be “paid” (e.g. through in-kind donations), 3) conducts a “sustainability audit” of the Communion, the resources available, in the Communion and the possibilities that open or limitation that impose.
- 3) Members of the Executive Committee contact the heads of member churches in their regions, reaching out to nurture relations and facilitate their participation in the work of the WCRC.

B. Strengthening Regions and Engaging with Member Churches

- 1) A brief and clear description of the responsibilities regarding the regions and the global office should be drafted and adopted by the Executive Committee and each Regional Council to guide cooperative work and strengthen the Communion.

- 2) Include representatives from the regions in the programme planning process, in addition to Executive Committee members from the regions. Sometimes there is no overlap between the two, and those leading in the regions do not see their hopes carried forward in the process.
- 3) Consider locating some of the programmatic work in particular regions where appropriate. This would enlarge the capacity of the Communion and also strengthen relations with the regions.
- 4) Understand and learn from the best practices of the regional councils.
- 5) In planning for General Council, consider what we have already received from the regions in the COVID & Beyond process, and bring that input to the fore.
- 6) In upcoming regional meetings, have a standing agenda item for regional requests for the solidarity of the wider communion, combined with a process of implementation.
- 7) Regional councils should be established in the areas where they do not yet exist.

C. Preparing for 2025 General Council

- 1) The programmatic plan leading to the 2025 General Council is affirmed, with these programmatic activities taking priority until then: COVID & Beyond process, consultations on empire and identity, programs and activities that engage youth, the Decade for Climate Justice, thematic preparatory work on the Council's theme.
- 2) The General Council Planning Committee should look at what the planning means for the question of the "why" and the questions of what the ecumenical movement has to offer, relying on the widest possible participation of member churches.

D. Developing Fundraising Strategies

- 1) A fundraising strategy needs to be developed for the WCRC which would include the following:
 - a. Clear responsibilities of both the global (including the Executive Committee) and regional bodies to guide cooperative work to strengthen the Communion in this area

- b. Keeping in mind the diversity of the Communion, customized approaches either regionally or nationally to best engage with regions, members, congregations, and individuals
 - c. Fundraising materials, including brochures, videos, etc., along with the use of current technologies and media.
 - d. Communion-wide fundraising efforts, such as the annual appeal and the developing Reformation/WCRC Sunday, both of which should not only be continued but also expanded.
- 2) The study of how staff might be located around the world should be continued (including the possibility of secondment or “housing” by member churches). Such a study should include consideration of the justice in different salary levels based on where staff members are situated.

E. Staffing Strategies

- 1) While rejoicing and affirming the staffing expansion in the last two years, efforts in this direction need to be strengthened and pursued rigorously to have consultants or coordinators (for specific programmes, projects, and operations) supported or seconded by the members or regions or ecumenical partners.
- 2) At the conclusion of the term of the current executive secretary for communications and operations, the WCRC will either appoint an executive secretary for communications and development or hire two non-executives, one to focus on communications and the other on fundraising.

F. Diversifying Communications

Regardless, of the specific job description for the communication staff person(s), communication should be diversified in several ways:

- 1) Regional councils should become a regular point of contact to share stories both from and to the global office.
- 2) Networks should be developed to support communication efforts, especially with member church communication departments, to increase the flow of stories between the Communion and its members (again, both ways); member churches should also be invited to second their communications staff on a part time basis.
- 3) The types of media regularly used should be increased, especially with the addition of video (which should be generated even from the grassroots levels following set guidelines); a network of Instagrammers should be

developed to share pictures from around the Communion (following set guidelines).

G. Leadership Structure

It has been noted that uncertainties remain regarding the current leadership model of the WCRC. While the CGS was born of emergency, the 2022 Executive Committee endorsed its continuation “until a general secretary is installed into office.” However, as was shown above and despite the successes of the system, this action did not settle all concerns, and after options were discussed at length, the following proposal passed unanimously:

Recommendation:

The unanimous recommendation of this committee is to discontinue the CGS model and appoint an acting general secretary through a process of interview from among the four executive secretaries. If that process does not bear the desired result, then the next step would be to invite a senior leadership person well-versed in and well connected to the affairs and operations of WCRC and with proven Leadership and administrative qualities. We recommend that the Executive Committee take necessary steps to implement the proposal within the next two months if at all possible.

Process Recommended:

- 1) With great thanks from the WCRC for all that has been accomplished in this interim, the Collegial General Secretariat will conclude its mandate upon the election of an acting general secretary, with the election to happen at the earliest possible date.
- 2) The process to elect an acting general secretary, who will serve through the 2025 General Council, will be as follows:
 - a) A special committee will be named to recommend a candidate as acting general secretary.
 - b) The four executive secretaries who currently compose the CGS will each be interviewed for consideration by this committee.
 - c) If none of them are named as the candidate, the committee will work to invite a veteran church leader with full familiarity with the work of WCRC and with proven success in leading organizations, raising funds, and supervising a multicultural team.

- d) Once a candidate is selected for recommendation, the WCRC Executive Committee will meet in a virtual extraordinary session to vote on the nominee.
- 3) Once elected, the acting general secretary will start at the earliest date possible, with the CGS concluding its service at that time.
- 4) Given the importance and urgency of this action the Committee recommends that this occurs within two months, if at all possible, of the Executive Committee's approval.

Rationale:

- 1) The acting general secretary will have a supervisory role for all staff while also continuing to work congenially and collaboratively as has been the tradition within the office.
- 2) Having an acting general secretary as the official “employer” of the organization, combined with the current structural reworking of the administrative responsibilities (and the hiring of a third administrator) will resolve many of the issues identified by staff that have inhibited them from working to their fullest potential.
- 3) If one of the programme executives is elected as acting general secretary, at least some of their programmatic responsibilities will be shifted to the remaining executives. This will necessitate some re-prioritization, along with additional work continuing.
- 4) This model, especially if enacted with the appointment of an executive for communications and development (or a pair of non-executive staff members), will provide for capacities in critical areas and should set the Communion on a path to fundraising success—assisting in both the funding of the 2025 General Council and the election of a general secretary shortly thereafter (if the new Executive Committee deems such desirable).
- 5) This option is a more responsible choice than incurring the expense of hiring a general secretary at this time, given our present financial reality and the additional expenses anticipated for the 2025 General Council.

Financial Implications:

With the addition of two programme staff to the team,⁴ the naming of a programme executive as acting general secretary would work as there is now sufficient staff capacity to compensate for the time the acting general secretary will need on general secretariat responsibilities. However, an additional amount of money would be needed to raise the acting general secretary's compensation to an appropriate level. This varies by each executive, but will be somewhere around 30,000 euros annually (for both salary and pension).

If someone other than a programme executive is elected, then an appropriate level of compensation will need to be decided, which could be up to 170,000 euros annually (which is the "cost" of the general secretary for salary and benefits (including pension)).

⁴ Muna Nassar, executive for mission and advocacy, and the incoming Coordinator for Gender Justice.



Report on the Life and Work of the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC)

INTRODUCTION

The ACRC continues to be a representation of the Communion in Africa. During the period from May 2022 to date, the ACRC has been working just at the back of a devastating COVID-19 era which has wreaked havoc in the operations of many denominations and other organisations. So, the ACRC suffered equally, and it recorded minimal successes. This report will present an overview of the life and work of the ACRC, since the last meeting of the WCRC Executive Committee. The report discusses the structure of the ACRC, the strategic plan and the operationalization thereof, the meetings and typical agenda items thereof, the participation of our youth in the AACC Youth Congress, the interventions in conflict ridden areas, and the planned ACRC Assembly in November 2023.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ACRC

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the four office bearers, the coordinators of the sub-regions and the five (5) members of the WCRC Executive Committee who come from Africa.

Table 1: ACRC Executive Committee – Office Bearers

Serial No	Position	Name
1	President	Rt Rev Dr Uma Onwunta (Nigeria)
2	Vice President	Rev Pauline Mwaura (Kenya)
3	Secretary	Rev Dr Lungile Mpetsheni (South Africa)
4	Treasurer	Mr M. Koku Mawulikplimi AMEGA (Togo)

The Subregional Coordinators

For control purpose and for ease of reach to the member churches, the ACRC is structured in four (4) regions as shown in the table below.

Table 2: ACRC Sub-regions and Coordinators

Serial No	Sub-region	Coordinator
1	Central Africa	Rev Isaac Kalonji (Democratic Republic of Congo)
2	Eastern Africa	Rev Martin Wanjala (Kenya)
3	Southern Africa	Rev Dr Gustav Claassen (South Africa)
4	West Africa	Mrs Paulina Afful-Arthur (Ghana)

OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK – STRATEGIC PLAN

The ACRC Assembly that was held in Rwanda in June 2018 adopted a strategic plan to serve as an operational framework for the Communion in the region. The table below portrays the strategic areas and the champions thereof.

Table 3: ACRC Strategic Areas and Champions

Serial No	KEY FOCUS AREAS (In line with WCRC)	RESOURCES/ People Responsible
1	Gender Justice	Prof Christine Landman Mrs Veronica Muchiri
2	Peace Making	Rev Dr Benibo Fubara-Manuel
3	Economic and Ecological Justice	Prof Jerry Pillay Rev Dr Gustav Claassen
4	Overcoming Racism and Affirming the Rights of Indigenous People	Rev Dr Buhle Mpofu
5	Refugees and Internally Displaced People	Mrs Veronica Muchiri Rev Omwero SC Knony-Halema
6	Youth Development	Adv Tibonge Ng'ambi
7	Theology	Rev Dr Setri Nyomi of Ghana

During the period under review, the ACRC hosted a webinar on Theology, with focus on Accra Confession in the context of COVID-19. Other planned activities could not be executed due to difficulties in coordination.

MEETINGS

Since the last report (March 2021), the ECRC Executive Committee has held four virtual meetings, as follows: 24 May 2022, 23 August 2022, 16 November 2022, and 15 February 2023. The Committee is making optimal use of the available technology to remain connected.

TYPICAL AGENDA ITEMS

The ACRC Executive has been consistent in discussing the following items, among others:

- ✓ Implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- ✓ Accompanying churches to incorporate Accra Confession in their life and work.
- ✓ Raising awareness about the Communion.
- ✓ Update on the activities of the WCRC, especially on COVID-19 and Beyond programme and WCRC sustainability project.
- ✓ ACRC and partnerships.
- ✓ Finance updates – especially on the payment of affiliations to the WCRC and ACRC.
- ✓ Subregional reports.

GRAPE

The Africa region has been a launching pad of the GRAPE project of the WCRC, with Kenya and South Africa identified for piloting the programme. Albeit some challenges at the initial stages, the programme started and is gaining momentum. We are waiting for a full report on the progress that has been made so far.

INTERVENTIONS IN CONFLICT RIDDEN AREAS

The ACRC Executive Committee received reports of the continuing skirmishes in parts of the DRC and the resultant suffering caused to the people. The Committee resolved to write to the WCRC Office proposing that a solidarity visit should be undertaken to support God's people in the DRC. This is work in progress.

ALL AFRICA YOUTH CONGRESS

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) held a Youth Congress in Ghana in November 2022. The ACRC encouraged its member who coordinates youth matters, Advocate Tibonge Ng'ambi, to lead the youth from the churches who are members of the Communion who participate in the Congress. The theme for the Congress was "Africa, my home, my future," and it focused on encouraging the youth from

Africa to love Africa and commit themselves to work towards the development of the continent. It is a venture that the ACRC is prepared to support.

ACRC ASSEMBLY

The ACRC will hold its Assembly in Nigeria in November 2023. The plan is to have many member churches attending. It will follow immediately after the AACC Conference, thus making it easy for the delegates to travel once for both the meetings. This will be an elective meeting. The Executive Committee is working hard to make the meeting a success. It is intention to make use of the opportunity to promote the Communion to it members and discuss the issues that are of concern to the WCRC. Hence, the WCRC executive secretaries have been invited to share the issues that may be pertinent to the life and work of the Communion and to also attend the Assembly. This is work in progress.

CONCLUSION

The ACRC strived to keep the Communion alive and at work in Africa. Some of the Committee have had difficulties to join the virtual meetings, mainly due to connectivity problems. Nonetheless, the ACRC held four meetings and addressed issues for the enhancement of the programmes of the Communion. The Communion has a great work to do in upholding the issues of justice and freedom among the people in the region. The visit to the DRC will be pursued for the sake of showing solidarity. The young people will be encouraged to always consider doing their best to promote Africa.



Report of AIPRAL (Latin America Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches)

Introduction

In June 2022, in Bogota, Colombia, the official handover to the Executive Committee elected in the last Assembly, held from April 21 to 23, 2022 (virtually) took place, in which both the members of the outgoing Executive Committee and the newly elected Executive Committee participated, including the handover of the General Secretariat. It was approved, in this meeting, to give continuity to the Strategic Plan of the previous executive with small changes based on the current needs and challenges of the member churches.

A pastoral letter was sent to the churches and related ecumenical organizations, renewing the commitment of the new board to continue the work previously done with renewed emphasis.

The guidelines that were decided to be maintained are:

- To make explicit the **theory of change** that articulates the actions of the plan: construction of knowledge that sustains the strengthening of capacities in the churches and their leaderships, for an effective mission in favor of peace and equity both at the territorial level and in its impact on social, political, and economic structures.
- To resize the strategic value of AIPRAL in relation to its member churches, valuing their contributions in terms of knowledge, perspectives, leadership, mission development, and resources, in order to act from the regional level to promote common learning, coordinated action, solidarity, and the witness of the Gospel in the region.
- To focus its contribution to change by strengthening the concept of **vital churches**, in which the dimensions of change in the churches to which AIPRAL contributes converge.
- To articulate the activities in programs based on common meanings and strategies, strengthening synergies between projects and activities, and connecting in an organic way the strategies of knowledge building, justice and peace, contribution to sustainable development, solidarity and advocacy, and communication.
- To organize internal teams in the Executive Committee based on the interests, emphases and gifts of its members, so that the diverse contributions converge in a renewed sense of mission with an integrating

perspective.

Here is, in broad strokes, an integrative synthesis of the situational analysis that serves as a starting point for the formulation and updating of the Strategic Plan of our Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches of Latin America (AIPRAL) to be developed during the period from 2022 to 2027.

Social similarities	Ecclesiastical similarities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracies as a challenge. • Polarization of societies from the political point of view. • Growth of poverty. • Growing inequalities. • Rampant inflation. • Conservative social movements vs. progressive social movements. • Increase in gender-based violence (increase in femicides). • Uncontrolled violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Churches that at the leadership level are ecumenical and committed to AIPRAL. • Churches that at the base are conservative and little informed about AIPRAL processes and the ecumenical world. • Churches that are officially very committed to a progressive perspective. • Churches that in their bases are polarized with respect to the public. • Churches that affirm a gender perspective and women's ordination.

The programs will work as follows:

Name	Projects and events	Departments and areas	Period(s)
Biblical Thought Reformed Theological	Dialogue and Cooperation between Reformed Theological Seminaries	Theology and Mission Justice and Communion	2023

(South-South and Latin America)

Meeting of schools - to share curriculum, chaplaincy projects, mission and pastoral care of young people.	Theology and Mission : Youth	2024
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Cycle MIRADAS: Activities for the production of thought on Reformed theology.

- Cycle 1: Project #ZAQUEO. Executive Secretariat | Justice and Communion | Theology and Mission | Women | Youth Cycle 1: 2024
- Cycle 2: Combating violence against children and adolescents. Cycle 2: 2025
- Cycle 3: Ecumenism from the base. Cycle 3: 2026

Biblical Studies Project (from a cross-cultural perspective)	Executive Secretariat Theology and Mission Justice and Communion Women Youth	2023-2027
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Preparation and collection of materials for the work of the AIPRAL Assembly. Theology and Mission | Women | Youth | Justice and Communion | Executive Secretariat. 2026-2027

Peace and Development	Impact of tax justice on the lives of women and young people	Justice and Communion Women Youth	2023-2024
	Women's contributions in alternative economy projects	Justice and Communion Women Youth	2025-2026
	The Justice of Christ, Peace in Your Community Program	Youth	2023 (Caribe)

Solidarity and Advocacy	(peace initiatives in territories)		
	Day of Prayer for Latin American Women	Women	2023-2027
	Leadership and visibility	Youth	2025
	Accompaniment to churches in justice processes in territories	Executive Secretariat	2023
	Women's empowerment project. Dialogues with women leaders on current issues from a Reformed perspective.	Women Executive Secretariat	2025
	Identification and visibility of the 2030 agenda in all AIPRAL projects.	Executive Secretariat Justice and Communion Theology and Mission Women Youth	2022-2027
	Advocacy in the Northern Triangle and Mexico (people in migration, domestic violence, gangs, environmental justice).	Executive Secretariat Justice and Communion	2023-2027
	Presentation of cases of local impact at regional or global levels.	Executive Secretariat Justice and Communion	2022-2027
	Accompanying churches in peace talks in Colombia and Venezuela	Executive Secretariat Justice and Communion	2022-2027
	Accompanying mission and diakonia initiatives of churches in the Northern Triangle	Executive Secretariat Women Youth Justice and Communion	2022-2027
Accompanying churches in the process of Cuba-US and Venezuela-US relations.	Secretaría Ejecutiva Mujeres Jóvenes Justicia y Comunión	2022-2027	
Campaigns: MIRADAS	Executive Secretariat Theology and Mission Justice	2022-2027	

Project #ZAQUEO #ZACtax and Communion | Women | Youth

Christian Unity

Human Sexuality

People in Migration and Human Rights

World Day of Prayer for Christian Unity

	Participation in high-level dialogues	Executive Secretariat	2022-2027
Communications	Integral communications project	Communications	2022-2027
	Publication of Voces en Alianza Vozes da Alianca	Editorial Board	2022-2027
	Communication development for advocacy	Executive Secretariat Communications	2022-2027

In the second half of the year 2022, we were able to carry out some of the planned activities.

Peace and Development

In this thematic axis we have been working with the Women's Department in recognizing the situation of our churches in terms of gender justice. AIPRAL was chosen as the region for the launching of the gender audit within the framework of the 16 Days of Activism, through an online seminar with the participation of several women from the region and the introduction of the proposal by WCRC Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness Philip Vinod Peacock, as well as the importance of including our male brothers in this conversation.

The network of women in the member churches remains active, and materials are provided for awareness, prevention and guidance on gender violence as well as the promotion and empowerment of women.

We also continue to accompany the member churches in Colombia in the process of the search for total peace, launched as a state policy and not only by the government of the current president of the country.

The Youth Department is planning an activity in the Caribbean area for the year 2023 on Culture of Peace together with the activation of the AIPRAL Youth Network.

Likewise, our participation continues to be active in the organization Religions for Peace as well as in the group that has been organized around the theme of Christian Zionism.

Solidarity and advocacy

As we expressed before, we continue to accompany the dialogue processes for peace in Colombia. We had the opportunity to renew this commitment in an event held in Havana with the vice-president of Colombia and with the participation in the meeting of the ACT-Colombia Forum in representation of both AIPRAL and WCRC. Adelaida Jimenez of the IPC, in addition to the appointment of Milton Mejia (IPC) as coordinator of DIPAZ (Inter-Church Dialogue for Peace).

The Zacchaeus Project continues to be an important part of our programs, with the active participation of our churches through materials that will be developed from the Justice and Communion program aimed at Sunday schools and Bible studies that are conducted in all our communities.

Communications

The Editorial Board of the *Voces en Alianza* digital magazine plans to publish two issues in the year 2023, one for Pentecost Sunday and the second for the Protestant Reformation Day. The theme of Vital Churches is taken up again with readings from the theological point of view, the transversalization of pastoral ministries such as the attention to the theme of migrations, as well as the approaches that groups such as women and youth have about it.

Our web page is kept active as well as the social networks we have.

Final considerations

In April 2023 the Executive Committee held its annual meeting in the city of Buenos Aires to review our priorities and organize our calendar of activities for the second semester of 2023, the year 2024, and the first semester of 2025.

Attached are copies of the Pastoral Letter of Bogota and the message for the Protestant Reformation Day.

Pbra. Dora Arce-Valentin
Secretaria Ejecutiva de AIPRAL

Appendix A: AIPRAL Pastoral Letter from Bogota

The Executive Committee of AIPRAL, meeting in Colombia, in the premises of the First Presbyterian Church of Bogota and as part of the strategic planning process for the next five years, has dedicated time to share the common challenges that from our faith and as Presbyterian and Reformed churches in the Latin American region, we find in our respective countries and regions. We have affirmed that, as signs of these times, we are called to consider these challenges as fundamental contents of our actions based on the prophetic vocation to which the Gospel calls us:

"but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness..." - Mt. 6:33

The experience of these days in Bogota has also had as a background the hope of a people that deserves to find the definitive ways for a peace longed for generations and whose cost in lives has sadly exceeded any other armed conflict in the region. On the other hand, we have witnessed the impact that the violence generated has had on the children and youth of this brother country. As the Executive Committee we consider it necessary to continue accompanying the Colombian churches and people in their yearnings for peace and justice, especially in the presidential election process.

Likewise, our commitment in the fight against all forms of violence, - which we recognize as the basis of any expression of oppression and inequity -, has been renewed in every devotional time, in every encounter with the Word of God, in every space of prayer and in the friendship that we have strengthened in the bond of love in Christ.

The news received of the murder of the indigenist Bruno Pereira and the journalist Dom Phillips, and the cruelty with which they were perpetrated, are the manifestation of the opposite of the evangelical spirit that animates AIPRAL and its member churches. We therefore condemn it and invite the Brazilian government to provide effective protection for the exercise of freedom of the press and for those who work in defense of the environment and the peoples of the Amazon.

We thank God that in the midst of all these realities, we are called to multiply hope. The challenge of being a family that works for justice, peace and human betterment, which is to work for the Reign of God, will continue to be the force that animates that hope because we trust in the biblical promise:

"Mercy and peace have met; justice and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall bud from the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven."
Psalm 85:10

Signed by: Wertson Brasil de Souza, President; Dora Arce-Valentín, Executive Secretary; Berla E. Andrade-De Vargas, Vice-President; Yasmín Mosquera García, Treasurer; Emilia Ahumada Tapia, Youth Director; Paulo Câmara M. Pereira Jr., Director of Theology and Communion; Blanca Geymonat Gonnet, Director of Women; Dan González-Ortega, Director of Justice and Communion

Appendix B: Text of the Video Message for Reformation Sunday

Celebrating Protestant Reformation Sunday has already become a tradition in many of our churches belonging to confessional families that connect their roots to this 16th century movement.

Undoubtedly, what we now call the Reformation was a movement that radically impacted history, even marking the end of the Middle Ages. It must be recognized that the so-called historical churches have appropriated October 31 for the beginnings although we know that the attempt to shake the institutional church of corruption and nonsense from, fundamentally from a reencounter with the Bible, began long before that date and Luther.

In 2017, along with the 500th anniversary celebrations, justice was done to our Waldensian sisters and brothers, to the heritage of the Hussite movement, among others.

On the other hand, it must be recognized that we have only recently begun to add to the great list of reformers, a no less important one of women. It is certainly not possible for the Reformation to have had fathers without also having had mothers. And they were not only women of noble families, but also of the people. Among the most representative we can name Marie Dentiere, included since 2002 in the International Monument of the Reformation in Geneva. Also Ursula Munstenberg, Elisabeth Von Brandenburg, Catherine Zell, Marguerite of Navarre, Renata of Ferrara. Each one from her place made her contribution to the movement, so it is fair to recognize that the history of the Reformation also has the faces and names of women.

The essence of this movement has an incalculable revolutionary spirit, especially in its eagerness to try to bring the Church back to the path that had begun in Palestine in the first century with a man called Jesus of Nazareth. Something like the sense of mission of which the Master always spoke to us: "if someone wants to be important, he will have to serve others". Fidelity to the original sources had to continue to be the seal of guarantee of its coherence with the message of the Gospel.

Many could be the edges of these beginnings that should make us look at our sense of mission today. However, I will point out only one, which makes the Christian faith a special opportunity to transform us as human beings in our ways of relating to one

another. Jesus' ministry and then the beginnings of what we know today as Christianity were marked by the subversive call to inclusion.

Jesus constantly confronted the exclusivist spirit of Pharisaic Judaism that interpreted the Law and Scripture in a presumptuous vacuum, leaving aside what was essential, that is, the integrity of the human being as a creature of God.

The Jesus movement wanted to subvert - I love that word linked to the Gospel! - the religious order in alliance with the economic and political order. The reasons? Well, they proposed a specific stereotype to deserve respect, dignity, rights... "male-adult-healthy-married-with male children-tax payer, and of course, a Jew who strictly complied with the Law with its more than 600 precepts". I confirm that such an individual -any resemblance with reality is not pure coincidence- was an absolute guarantee of everything good and pure that society could understand as such.

Then came this Nazarene named Jesus to preach that women, girls and boys, prostitutes, tax collectors, handicapped people and even foreigners, just to name the most notable, were God's favorite creatures. Not only that, but for them it was the Kingdom of Heaven. It was not for nothing that they persecuted him, tried to demoralize him, condemned him unjustly and led him to a cross designed for those who disturbed the order.

Perhaps nothing could have been done against him, but I will leave that for another occasion. What is certain is that the movement that Jesus brought together during his ministry and consolidated after his resurrection, was persecuted for several centuries simply because he courageously affirmed that "there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male nor female" because in Christ Jesus we are one family, the human family of God that, together with all Creation, deserves love, respect, dignity and rights.

But we also need to recover the sense of our mission as a community of faith, bearer of a message of hope and commitment to the whole human family, to all Creation. This requires a revolution in our imagery when it comes to celebrating and sharing who we are.

May this celebration of the Reformation remind us that our fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus the Christ, our fidelity to all that lives and breathes, is the best legacy we can leave to the generations that will follow us and to the society we serve in the name of the one who first loved and dignified us!



Annual Report of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC)

In this time: May 2022 - May 2023

Isaiah 41:10: Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Psalms 46:1-3: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

The last 12 months across this region have and continues to be challenging for all our member churches. I choose the Scripture verses above as those in which I want to center and reflect on our denominations across this region.

Across the Region

United States

In the US where banks failed in 2023, worrying many of a repeat of the crash in 2008, the economy despite this is still strong. This, however, masks the fact that the gap between the haves and have-nots continues to increase prior to and more so coming out of COVID. This growing vulnerable population struggles to make ends meet and is dependent on government programmes and increasingly more so, on the church.

Indications are that this trend will continue. This marginalized group continues to be made up of persons of colour, Asians, Hispanics, and others, by definition 'not white'. It is these groups that face increasing acts of violence—racial discrimination as an everyday occurrence coupled with gun and police violence, antisemitic acts, shootings in churches and synagogues, etc. It is particularly in these spaces that the church plays a significant role—*the church is about community*. The church brings not just physical relief but great hope to those marginalized as we focus on the words of Psalm 46.

This growing divide is exacerbated by the fact that the USA continues to become a society that is heavily focused on individual comfort and individual rights, with less emphasis on community. This is evidenced in the ways changes are made in States' legislative policies denying health care to marginalized groups or absent respect for persons of other gender affiliations or removing restrictions around gun ownership.

Gun violence in schools is best understood by a quote: “more mass shooting in schools than days so far in the year” (22 January 2023).

As of 29 March 2023, reports are that there have been 13,900 persons killed by gun violence of which 578 were teens or children. Of this latter number, 74 were killed in school shootings. These number are up from 2022.

It is our churches who have stood with families in their homes and at grave sides and comforted them. Mental health issues are visible as families and communities try to deal with the traumatic effects of gun violence. Our churches, over stretched, have responded with programmes of help and healing.

It was the PC(USA) that faced a mass shooting just two blocks from the Presbyterian Center in Louisville on 10 April 2023 where eight persons were injured and four killed in a bank. Once the shootings began, the Presbyterian Center went into lockdown, preventing people from entering or exiting the building. In less than two hours, a brief prayer service was held in the third-floor chapel. Kathy Lueckert, president of Presbyterian Church (USA), Corporation, opened the service.

“It’s a beautiful morning and yet death is all around us. It’s a sad commentary that we have to have a service like this. We should not be here as we think about what has happened so close to us,” she said. “I think of first responders who are processing all of this. I think of all those families who went to work today and won’t go home tonight. Life is so fragile and here we are again, thinking about the epidemic of gun violence in this country. There never seems to be enough death or casualties to make a difference. I don’t know what anyone can do to stop this epidemic, but it must stop. Louisville is a small place. Many of us will have connections, so keep each other in our prayers.”

A bit later that morning J. Herbert Nelson (PC(USA) stated clerk) issued a statement. “How many more times will we have to cry out, ‘How long, O Lord!’ Today we mourn the loss of our neighbors. One more time, just two blocks away from us, blood has been shed,” he said. “We offer our prayers of consolation for those who have suffered injury or loss and we cry out yet again, to all not directly caught up in this violence, in the words of Bob Dylan’s painful ballad, ‘How many times can a man turn his head and pretend that he just doesn’t see?’ To the leaders among us who have failed to adequately address the curse of gun violence in our country, and who continue to block legislative efforts to curtail the proliferation of weapons designed to kill, we say, once again, ENOUGH!”

The voice of our Reformed faith is in the space of pain and grief, the ever-present advocate for all of humanity. Isaiah 41:10 gives us hope.

Canada

Emerging from the pandemic over the past year, Canada's economy is reported as being on a better footing than its peers including robust population growth, a strong labour market, and a well-regulated and well-capitalized financial system. Canada will be able to weather a global economic slowdown analysts predict.

Amidst all this are the impacts of the changing nature of work and the harsh realities for already vulnerable families this presents. This, coupled with an aging population and an increasing dependence on immigration finds its struggling health care system and food insecurity as matters for discussion in Parliament in Ottawa. The household cost of living has risen sharply, and basic food items saw a sharp increase over this period. As one would expect this is another big blow to the already vulnerable communities.

Internally, our churches face problems with their congregations unable to maintain church buildings which need significant maintenance and repairs. Many of these buildings are being sold or, where possible, congregations are finding creative ways to maximize use beyond the normal usage of church activities to increase income.

National Trust for Canada regeneration project leader Robert Pajot, says every community in the country is going to see old church buildings shuttered, sold off, or demolished. He went on to say, "It's not just beautiful, historic buildings that will be lost, but also the sense of community provided by worship spaces. Churches have not just been for Sunday, but for Girl Guides and political meetings, weddings and funerals, piano lessons, and programs for the homeless. It's not just about the buildings. It really is beyond the impact of the loss of a heritage building in the community. The places of faith really have been, for generations, centers of so much of community life. They play a de facto community hub role, community service role."

Amidst this reality, tithing is down, and there is a decline in church attendance with an ageing membership. Added to this is an increasing shortage of ministers which has found amalgamation of congregations in city areas while rural congregations may never have their own minister.

Amidst all these issues, our churches in Canada remain focused on acknowledgement of their legacy role in the residential schools of the past and the reconciliation process and work to be done with their Indigenous brothers and sisters as they model the compassion and love of Christ. This, while also focused on being the church for the present time responding to the needs of those in community in areas such as mental health, poverty, domestic violence, among others.

The Caribbean

In the Caribbean region our member churches face a cross section of issues. The political impact on the church in Cuba is well known and impacts the CANAAC Steering Committee. Due to restrictions on using Zoom (or any audio/video platform) their representative cannot join us at our monthly meetings. Food insecurity and political dissonance is an everyday reality for those on the ground seeking to do ministry in Cuba.

Wider afield a couple of our churches in the Caribbean are inactive, or dealing with leadership difficulties, both of which concern us.

We have as an action item to reach out to member churches across the whole of the Canaac region where we are not hearing from them to understand ways that we can better maintain connections with them.

Otherwise, our churches are busy in the face of re-engaging as church post-COVID. Issues of decline in attendance, decrease in tithes and pledging, online church as a way of doing church are the status quo. In spite of these challenges the church is responsive to the needs of migrant people and has developed programs and services to support them. Also, our churches have taken up peace initiatives with a growing number of our members trained in mediation services.

Activities

Against the backdrop of where our churches found themselves emerging from the pandemic, we determined that we need to work in a couple of ways to support them both at the grassroots level as well as engage with church leadership. We have done both.

1. Monthly Reflections

Our first activity was to reinstate our reflections monthly which started in December 2022. In January 2023, a small team reviewed our Directions document, pulling theme options for our reflections for the period June 2023 to December 2024.

The thinking being, is that midpoint of 2024, a small team would regroup again and work on the theme for January 2025 to December 2026. The theme chosen for 2023/2024 is "*Unity in our Diversity.*"

The team has produced a fulsome document which provides sub-themes and Scriptures for each. This document is what persons who write reflections will use as a guide while reflecting their local context.

Reflections may include artwork or music and shall be translated from English to Spanish and French to account for the primary languages of the region.

2. *Panel with our Heads of Denominations*

Over the past 12-18 months as I connected with various heads of our denominations it became clear that they either did not know much about CANAAC or openly expressed the view that CANAAC had little to offer them. They also had difficulty with the fact that there were so many other ecumenical groups calling on their time and attention that they had to prioritize. As an approach to remedy that we invited ten of our denominational heads to join us on a panel on 14 March 2023 where the Steering Committee members were in a listening capacity only. An independent moderator led the panel discussions. Prior to the panel, members of the Steering Committee submitted questions for the moderator to ask.

Each denomination's leader was asked to provide a one-page paper which gave an overview of challenges and opportunities faced by their church. The panel discussions coupled with these papers are rich and robust. It was the first time some individuals on the panel were meeting each other and there was a call for there to be more spaces like this for them to meet and share together.

On the matter of further participation with CANAAC the obstacle was around scheduling and a request for dates as much as 6-12 months out. What they were clear about is that they would like the dialogue to continue.

A snapshot of the issues and the conversations from our member church leadership would look like this:

- Decline in numbers in churches and in church financial resources.
- Restructuring churches where there have been separations.
- Pain of Indigenous peoples and the residential school issues. Mass graves continue to be uncovered. The need for reconciliation and re-engagement.
- Nothing was new in the pandemic; it just uncovered the issues which were already there.
- Prior to COVID the church was in survival mode; COVID exposed that. How do we transition from survival to movement—become the emerging church?
- Representation of women and youth in church leadership a concern.
- Is the question “does the church have a future?” or is it “does the future have a church and what kind of church will it be?”
- CANAAC should focus on how we integrate justice into mission.
- CANAAC can help us reflect on what is mission and what does it mean to make disciples in our post-Christian context.

These are but a few of the rich pieces which emerged from the documents and the conversation space of the panel.

Our next steps are to pull all the information together from the panel and develop a strategy for keeping our denominational leadership appropriately engaged.

We will also be drawing out common themes emerging from their submissions which will allow smaller groups across church lines to develop concept documents for engaging together.

This approach we hope will focus on bringing strengths from all corners of the region removing a north-south divide and focusing on matters of church as one in Christ. Naturally, this is an ongoing piece of work which will stay front and center of CANAAC's agenda as its capacity to be sustainable as an ecumenical body allowing its member churches to feel its presence and value in this region.

Other Matters to Report

1. Planning for the CANAAC General Assembly late 2024

Work is underway on this, and our July Steering Committee meeting has been set as the date when we hope to have key aspects of this planning settled.

2. Admin Support

The CANAAC region has never had administrative support over the past 5- 7 years at least, and this has had an impact on the amount of work which was possible to get done. One significant development over this period is the "gift" of Rev. Chelsea Lampen (RCA) as Admin Support to CANAAC. Since Chelsea joined us, we have been able to get so much more done in a timely manner. We are grateful for her support.

In the CANAAC region our churches have been unwavering in the face of challenges everywhere around them. CANAAC has listened carefully to their challenges and opportunities. It is for us now to develop a strategic plan which finds us embracing leadership of our denominations, drawing those in who are currently inactive and providing resources for our congregations on the ground thru our reflections and other resources which will come online in the future.

The CANAAC Steering Committee is grateful to Almighty God for all that we have been able to accomplish over this time. I draw comfort from this Scripture as I think back on the many challenges facing our churches in their various spaces: *Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).*

We ask for your prayers as we stride towards the future days ahead pouring our energy and commitment to Christ into this ecumenical space of our reform faith.

Yours in Christ,

Angela Martins
Chair, CANAAC Steering Committee



World
Communion
of Reformed
Churches

Annual Report of WCRC Europe

Martina Wasserloos
President of WCRC-European Region

A happy reunion of the gathered communion in Europe

After two years of Corona-distancing, the European Area Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches met in Thessaloniki on 4-6 May 2023. More than thirty delegates and guests discussed current issues affecting the organisation and its nearly forty member churches, including the ongoing constitutional amendment, responses to the humanitarian and political situation caused by the war in Ukraine, and the document entitled *About true worship in the Church in the distress of the present – Seven Theses*, prepared by the theological working group of WCRC Europe.

Confessing Christ and living out communion in times of Crisis – the war in Ukraine

In the last year, the European Area and its Steering Committee have been paying particular attention to the war in Ukraine and the Reformed community's advocacy and support for Transcarpathia. We were reported about a lot of fear and worries and we shared thoughts and prayers with our Eastern and Central European churches regularly. Together with WCRC global, we were also in contact with several partners and NGO's in Ukraine. The aggression against Ukraine has inspired unprecedented solidarity among European churches, which has been reflected in the visits of European Reformed/Presbyterian churches and partner organisations to Transcarpathia. The support of their service in hosting refugees and direct support by so many members of the communion highlights the strength of the communion between the Reformed churches of our continent, even when they disagree on some other critical issues.

Beside all that we know, that war is a reality not only in Europe but in several places all over the world. Again we asked our member churches to pray for those who are facing war and crimes against humanity.

Speaking about the situation in Ukraine, Bishop Zán Fábíán said that they had to see

the failure of humanity and diplomacy in all what had happened, and the fear that had spread across people's faces as a result. Western Ukraine, including Transcarpathia, has been hit by a huge wave of refugees. In practice, the Reformed community there could have fled the country, as they had the opportunity to go to Hungary. The faith of the people helped to make the community there feel that God's grace remained with them, that they had a place to live, which they had been given, and that it should be preserved for the future generations. It is part of their heritage. They need to keep the community in their faith so that they can call on the name of the Lord and hear the Gospel.

Confessing Christ and living out communion means at well to be grateful that all the Reformed pastors have stayed in place in Ukraine, seventy-three pastors doing ministries in their communities, dealing with the refugee crisis as well. Sunday worship has been transformed into a weekday diaconate of care for refugees.

Today, in churches where it was unthinkable for pastors to preach in Russian or Ukrainian a year or two ago, that is now a reality, and refugees have found a new home and safety with them; refugees can hear the Gospel of Hope throughout their places of worship. Worship services have become pastoral occasions where people are given comfort and hope. Their hope reaches beyond earthly existence, focusing on eternal life.

Mostly broken families, internally displaced mothers with their children came to Transcarpathia. Reformed schools and kindergartens began to accommodate the refugees, but private homes of church members were also set up to care for them. True worship was realized in assistance, overcoming the kind of resistance that had previously meant building walls against the Ukrainian and Russian majority. However, alongside this, they have to live in a very disadvantaged situation, as fundamental rights are constantly being denied to the native Hungarian communities, but also to other minorities.

Another huge challenge for them is the fact that the war has caused young people to flee abroad. The elderly, the sick and those who no longer had enough money to leave are left behind alone. They clearly need to be taken care of, but everything else is overshadowed by the war. Every day they must bear witness to the Christ they follow.

This year is the "Year of Hope" in Transcarpathia, a motto based on Job 14:1-8 and we can learn from our brothers and sisters there, that even a tree has hope, for it will sprout again, even if its trunk is cut down; if roots are strong, it will sprout again. But the root that has died in the dust, if it only smells the water, will sprout again, as it says in the book of Job. There is clearly a new world order emerging, but it is not this that we need to talk about, but rather the possibility of living a new life.

Many people think that NATO, the United States or China will be the peacemakers, that these powers will bring solutions to the war, but we must see that God is the Peacemaker, because it is God who has reconciled the entire world in Christ. The most damaging thing is now uncertainty throughout Ukraine, so it is precisely in this situation that they must preach the Kingdom of God throughout the country.

Reading the signs of times – True worship

Before the corona shut down, the council decided to establish a working group to address the issue of nationalism and xenophobia inside churches and societies in Europe. The background was the experience that in many countries of Europe, nationalistic movements are becoming strong and a dismissive attitude towards the so-called „others“ was emerging. This development contradicts our belief that we are one in Christ and is against the biblical idea of *koinonia*. It excludes people in our midst from communion and participation. Because some of us are living in hardships of disease and war, we sharpen the task.

By listening to the Word of God and asking for evidence of the Holy Spirit, worship is always carried out in direct critical solidarity with currently prevailing and challenging living conditions. The Church always distinguishes between two forms of worship, namely the liturgical worship of the assembled congregation and worship in everyday life around the world. These two forms are distinctly different from one another, yet must never be separated from one another, as they belong together: a one-sided focus on liturgical worship could lead to a withdrawal of faith from the world, while a one-sided emphasis on worship in everyday life would entail a moral leveling of the gospel message. Both forms of worship have their essential purpose. In view of decreasing participation, we want to remind one another of the fundamental character of the liturgical service, which is more than a pleasant break from everyday life, namely the communal assurance in invoking God and in listening to his word. Worship in everyday life throughout the world remains dependent on this certainty, and gains its special orientation and determination from it. With seven theses, we encouraged a new focus on the vocation, constitution and mission of the Church, as they are particularly envisioned in its worship:

1. Worship occurs in the living PRESENCE of God.
2. Worship takes place in the context of the first commandment: "You shall have no other gods before me!"
3. Worship awakens hope beyond the challenges of human existence.
4. Worship contradicts the power of death
5. Worship encourages active anticipation in the kingdom of God
6. Worship enables rejuvenated perception and life-serving shaping of reality.
7. Worship bears witness to God's reconciliation with people and places it at the service of reconciliation.

The paper ends with the words:

The fact that the Bible and newspapers always belong together will find a special place in the invocation of God at the least, especially in intercession, when the challenges we face overwhelm us and place us into painful embarrassment. Even when we feel powerless, we are not alone.

Solidarity inside Europe

To build communion, to stay together and to journey forward in the light of our hope is the reason, why we strengthen communication between our member churches digitally and face to face, in prayers and concret action. I will give you some single flashlights:

During the corona crisis we had strong contact to our member churches, hearing their challenges and what they are facing. Because of the fact, that many of them – especially of the smaller member churches – are living in financial hardships during corona crisis - WCRC Europe offered a solidarity fund to help to support projects and sometimes staff coasts to pay pastors.

Since 2018 the Steering Committee have decided to visit member churches that are either particularly small or facing particular challenges. We went to Oradea/Romania to speak about the life as minority in a postcommunistic environment, losing young people because of work migration and struggling with other challenges – like migration and poverty.

Since the war in Ukraine broke out, we have been engaged in a lot of action. We initiated weekly round table discussion with our member churches to share prayers and facts. A solidarity visit in April 2022 brought us close together. Member Churches supported the fund to finance Pastors in Transkarpathia.

We also visited the refugee Camp of Moria, to support projects of the Reformed Church in Greece.

Our brothers and sisters in Middle East – close in communion

The WCRC Europe Council decided to strengthen the contacts to churches in the Middle East, to learn about their challenges and struggles and to give a kind of umbrella to those in the global neighbourhood who are not organized with their own region. This is, why we made a solidarity visit in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria and also in Palestine last year.

Our visit in Lebanon, guided by President Najla Kassab, was the starting point for friendship, solidarity and compassion. The interest of what happens in Lebanon is

ongoing in the midst of European sister churches. The willingness to support projects is high.

Last year the Steering Committee visited Churches in Palestine especially the Baraka Church, the smallest WCRC member church. The Baraka Church is known for their hospitality for pilgrims. Pastor Danny Awad presented us a flourishing life of his parish. We learned that nothing is easy in the Holy land. Beside a lot of questions we had afterwards: the Baraka church tries to be known as more unpolitically and open for everyone and they are so full of enthusiasm and thanks to be member of WCRC! The had manufactured a communion cup, which I have the honour now to bring from my desk in the midst of our communion.

Living in the Holy Land means living in everlasting crisis. We experienced the injustices and pressure but also the strong willingness to stay for peace. This is, why I want to tell you a story at the end of this report:

One evening I met an old Palestinian lady. Her ground was annexed by Israeli soldiers. To go to worship she had to go across the ground – what was strongly forbidden, or to drive by car, which means 10 kilometers. She decided to cross her ground. A young soldier pointed his gun on her. She said: “Grandchild, do you want so kill your Grandma on her way to pray for you?” The young soldier was terribly confused and lowered the gun. Next Sunday he greeted the old lady and let her pass. The Sunday after he was replaced and another soldier was there.

Report of the United Nations Ministry

from Sue Rheem, Representative to the United Nations

The report of the Ministry at the United Nations to the 2023 Executive Committee meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) highlights aspects of the ongoing witness that a presence at the United Nations makes possible.

United Nations Headquarters in New York City began the year still closed to the public and conducting its business online. Civil society was finally allowed back into the building in March, but most meetings continued to be online. However, when world leaders gathered for the opening of the 77th session of the General Assembly in September, more than 80% of world leaders showed up in person. As the year drew to a close, in-person meetings became more common.

The Ministry continued to work on the Presbyterian Mission Agency Matthew 25 vision that focuses on Matthew 25: 31-46, the parable of the sheep and goats in which Jesus makes clear, that what we do matters to God and how we treat others is important to God, and how we treat others who are the least of us. The vision focuses on dismantling structural racism, eradicating systematic poverty, and building congregational vitality, as well as the intersectional priorities of climate change, gender justice and heteropatriarchy, and militarism.

The Ministry continued to maintain two broad areas of engagement: to advocate for justice and peace in the name of Jesus Christ at the United Nations and to equip individuals and communities to engage in global discipleship.

The Ministry was staffed by the Representative to the United Nations and Associate for International Issues. In addition, two young adult volunteers joined the Ministry in September to begin their one year of service. The Ministry transitioned from remote work to hybrid work in September, coming into the office couple of days a week. The Presbyterian Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church (USA) funds 100% of expenses at the United Nations Ministry.

In September 2022, Representative to the UN met with WCRC executive secretaries Hanns Lessing and Philip Peacock at the WCRC office in Hanover, Germany, to examine ways to strengthen the relationship and discuss priorities of work. A new memorandum of understanding between WCRC and Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations was drafted and is under final review.

Rooted in the Reformed tradition, we affirm that God, Creator and Sovereign of all, so loved the world that Jesus the Son was sent with a message of justice and peace, redemption, and reconciliation. God calls us to serve as ambassadors for Christ

seeking God's peace and reconciliation in a world where humanity and creation are wounded, broken, and in need of healing.⁵ Together we seek life in all its fullness by:

1. Addressed issues of **climate justice, ecological justice and care for creation** by participating in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, from 7 November to 18 November 2022. Participated in the Talanoa Dialogue which was UNFCCC organized by the Interfaith Liaison Committee for faith-based organizations to meet and discuss where we've been, where we are, and where we can go from here. The outcome document was presented to the UNFCCC leadership. Advocated for climate financing for most vulnerable communities and developing countries.
2. Also addressed **climate justice** by participating in the **Committee of Religious NGOs Climate Working Group** working with faith-based organizations to better prepare NGOs on the COP processes and raise awareness on the impacts of climate change, and to work towards better collaboration among faith-based and UN community in New York.
3. As a member of the **NGO Committee on Migration**, advocated for migrants, refugees, stateless persons, internally displaced persons, trafficked persons facing environment/climate-induced displacement and situations of vulnerability.
4. Advocated for **gender justice** by participating in the 66th **Commission on the Status of Women** from 14 March to 25 March 2022 in a hybrid format. The Commission focused on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes. Over 25,000 participated from around the world using the online platform. We invite WCRC to bring delegates to future commissions.
5. The Ministry participated in the 60th Session of the **United Nations Commission on Social Development** from 7 to 16 February 2022 in a hybrid format. The Commission deliberated on the priority theme "Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda." We invite WCRC to bring delegates to future commissions.
6. The Ministry participated in the 22nd Session of the **Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues** from 25 April to 6 May 2022. The theme was "Indigenous

⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

peoples, business, autonomy and the human rights principles of due diligence including free, prior and informed consent.” We invite WCRC to bring delegates to future commissions.

7. Monitored and advocated on behalf of **Ukraine** when Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Met with members of the United Nations Security Council as part of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council. However, there was inaction at the Security Council because Russia used its veto power to block adoption of any resolution on Ukraine. UN General Assembly adopted resolutions calling for immediate end to war in Ukraine and demanding Russia’s immediate withdrawal from the country. The General Assembly also adopted a landmark resolution aimed at holding the five permanent Council members, of which Russia is one, accountable for their use of veto. Monitored delivery of humanitarian aid by various UN agencies and establishment of safety corridors for Ukrainians fleeing the fighting.
8. Monitored and advocated for peace in **Israel-Palestine** at the Security Council as a member of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council, UN agencies, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, international human rights organizations, and with the Israel Palestine NGO Working Group at the UN to work on issues of for durable peace, human rights, and to oppose the illegal annexation of land in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
9. Monitored and Advocated for a just and lasting peace in **Syria** after over a decade of war. Continued to advocate with the United Nations Security Council as a member of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council. Advocated for Security Council cross-border resolution allowing UN to bring aid to north-west Syria.
10. Monitored the peace process and advocated for peace in **Colombia** with the United Nations Security Council as a member of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council on issues related to peace, peacebuilding, democracy, and human rights. Monitored the situation in **Nicaragua** on issues related to human rights and democracy.
11. Monitored and advocated on behalf **Cuba**. The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted an annual resolution calling for US to end its embargo against Cuba in light of the global economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Worked with ecumenical partners at the United Nations and the Cuban Mission to bring greater awareness of the challenges faced by Cuban people.

12. Monitored and advocated on **Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Sudan, and South Sudan** with the United Nations Security Council as a member of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council and UN agencies on issues related to peace and security, democracy, gender justice, migration, sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, and human rights. Ongoing regional conflicts in these countries involving multiple armed groups fighting for territorial and resource control have resulted in loss of life and destruction of homes, churches and hospitals, and causing internal displacement.
13. Monitored and advocated on behalf of **Madagascar** on the effects of climate change, such as cyclones, draught and floods, at the UN Commission on the Status of Women and at COP27 Climate conference. Madagascar is one of Africa's most disaster-prone and food-insecure countries according to the World Food Program. In the South, severe ongoing drought forced Madagascans to survive on wild leaves and locusts and many people fled rural areas.
14. Monitored and advocated for peace on the **Korean Peninsula** with the United Nations Security Council as a member of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council, UN agencies, Member States, on issues related to peace and reconciliation, sanctions, human rights and humanitarian assistance. After the Korea Ecumenical Forum held in Germany in September 2022, renewed efforts for engagement for peace was conducted with ecumenical partners.
15. Monitored and advocated on **Myanmar** at the United Nations Security Council and UN agencies and international human rights organizations on issues related to human rights, democracy, sanctions, peace, and migration. Also, monitored and advocated on **Philippines** on issues related to human rights, democracy, migration and development by working with UN agency, international human rights organizations, and ecumenical partners.

There will continue to be needs and opportunities for the Reformed family to work and witness for peace and justice within the context of the United Nations.

I give thanks for all who have been partners in the work described above and who support the Ministry through prayer, participation, and financial gifts in these challenging times as the world continued to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. I am grateful for the PMUN staff, Ivy Lopedito, Victoria Alexander, and Emma Johnston, as well as our Washington colleagues in the Office of Public Witness, Jimmie Hawkins, the Director of the Advocacy Offices and Catherine Gordon. I also express gratitude for the ecumenical colleagues here as we have supported one another through this time to work for God's peace and justice at the United Nations. I also express my appreciation for my WCRC colleagues as we seek to collaborate on areas of mutual interest.

Report on the John Knox Center

from Serge Fornerod

Last year, the John Knox International Reformed Center (JKIRC) reported following to WCRC Executive Committee:

The Center has emerged relatively unscathed from the pandemic. We have our financial worries – but then, these days, who doesn't! At least, we can now hope to soon be able to rehire our staff on a full-time basis and to welcome back groups.

Looking forward, we have reconsidered how to progress and are now working with a team of volunteer architects, engineers, hospitality specialists, and city planners to construct a greener Center which will build on our history, on our statutory goals, and on a better integration into the local community. This will of course take a few years, but it always takes time to build in Geneva. In the meantime, the committee has given a framework to the Programme Commission which now plans to organize annual meetings on various topics open to all who are interested.

Furthermore, the Witnessing Together in Geneva movement, so dear to our hearts and those of many church and international communities, is active again and planning its intercommunal celebrations for 9 September 2022.

In 2022, the situation continued to improve. The occupation rate of the rooms is now around 85%. It is due to the low prices and also a new partnership with booking.com. We could therefore again employ the staff at the same rate as before the pandemic. The year ended positively. Unfortunately, the rise of energy prices last winter has already consumed these gains. But we remain confident that we can achieve a balanced year in 2023. Many former clients are coming back to the Center, like American universities or the closest neighbor in Geneva, the WHO.

The Programme Committee is struggling and actually on hold. Several members left the group due to other responsibilities or job changes. Chris Ferguson resigned from the Association after the conclusion of his term as WCRC general secretary.

The plans for a sustainable Center in the future are well in progress, although not as far advanced as we would like. This is due to the fact that all our advisors are working on a voluntary basis. We have made the basic calculations and checks with the authorities for the future buildings, that will be a mix of conference center (up to 200 seats), hotel (50 rooms), and housing for long-term students (15) and active seniors (20). This will have to be managed in a way that creates a financial benefit to run an activity programme in the Center. Three pillars of these activities have been sketched: 1) cultural and conference activities, 2) strengthening the work of

“witnessing together in Geneva,” and 3) facilitating the stay in Geneva for students, scholars, and interns from less wealthy countries.

The next steps in this process are:

- establishing the terms of reference for the project contest for architects. Probably, the reconstruction will take place in two phases: 1) Renovating the Flory House and the Small Chalet, 2) Demolishing of the other buildings and construction of the new venues, while the Flory House will be open again for conferences, seminars, or groups works. The contest will include the respect of high ecological standards and the preservation of the natural surroundings. Opening of the contest is foreseen at the beginning of 2024. If things go rightly, works could start in 2024 and last till 2027.
- establishing a business plan for the construction and the running costs of the future Center.
- Fundraising for the contest and for the project. The “two phases” option for the construction might be more suitable for fundraising. It will also be a mix of loan and donations, maybe also some investments. An open question will be whether WCRC member churches can be addressed for fundraising at a later stage.

All this will make necessary the creation of the *John Knox International Foundation* that will replace the Association. The Foundation will have to take over the assets and the goals of the Association as they are, in particular as set in Art. 2.

The General Assembly of the Association approved on 8 May 2023 the principle of this creation. The Committee will in the next months draft the statutes of the Foundation with a lawyer and call for an extraordinary General Assembly of the Association by the end of the year to approve the transition to a Foundation and elect a first board.

It is foreseen that the Protestant Church in Switzerland (PCS) will be part of the board. The Association will continue to exist with a consultative status in the Foundation. Later, the board will coopt other members according to the profiles needed.

Due to the amount of money that has to be raised (approx. 20 million Swiss francs), it is necessary that the board will be made of experienced persons in fundraising within the Geneva context, as well as known personalities in Geneva. At the same time, we will have to ensure that other members of the board will be protectors of the tradition, the history, and the values of the Center, in particular its programmatic profile in the international, ecumenical, and intercultural city of Geneva.

The period until next WCRC Executive Committee meeting will be of strategic importance with the creation of the Foundation, the choice of the right architectural project, and the business plan for the running of the future Center.

For the WCRC, the interest of this project is: 1) To preserve its participation in the decision taking bodies of JKIRC, including in potential fundraising aspects, and 2) To take part in a later stage to the programming of activities of the Center, either through a part-time position of “programme officer” or partnering with the Center to offer seminars and conferences or collaborating in the organizations of such events. The collaboration with the WCC could be an added value in this regard, due to the close distance to WCC (15-minute walk) and the room rates of the Center, which will certainly be cheaper than in the planned WCC hotel at the Green Village Center.

Appendix: Statutes, Association of the John Knox International Reformed Center

Preamble: The Association governed by these bylaws was formed on April 23, 1953, at the initiative of the Presbyterian Church USA (formerly the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America) under the name “Association of the Christian Center for Foreign Students.” This name was later changed to “John Knox Home Association” and then to “John Knox International Reformed Center.”

For many years, the Association has maintained a close relationship with the World Communion of Reformed Churches (“WCRC”), formerly the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (“WARC”).

In 2019, the Association decided to revise its bylaws to better reflect its functioning. These new bylaws therefore replace those adopted by the first General Assembly and modified regularly over the years.

In order to simplify the drafting of these bylaws, and without any discriminatory intention, gender-neutral language has not been used.

Chapter I: Name, Purpose, Headquarters, and Duration of the Association

Article 1

The Association of the John Knox International Reformed Center (hereinafter “the Association”) is a non-profit organization as provided in Article 60 and following of the Swiss Civil Code. It is also governed by these bylaws.

Article 2

The purpose of the Association is to develop and administer a center in Geneva intended to:

- a) Provide a haven of peace conducive to reflection, as well as a neutral meeting place that stimulates dialogue between cultures;
- b) Promote social justice, peace, human rights, and sustainable development;
- c) Encourage dialogue between parties in conflict, seeking to replace confrontation with cooperation, while respecting the dignity of each party;
- d) Maintain contacts with ecumenical, interdenominational, and academic organizations, as well as with churches and international governmental and non-governmental organizations;
- e) Provide opportunities to hold meetings without religious, confessional, or political restrictions.

To this end, the Association makes its premises, infrastructure, and services available to all, with priority to those who are actively engaged in promoting the Association’s values and purpose.

Article 3

The headquarters of the Association are at the Center, located at 27 chemin des Crêts-de-Pregny in Grand-Saconnex (Geneva).

Article 4

The duration of the Association is perpetual. It may be dissolved at any time by a vote of the General Assembly in accordance with the conditions set forth in these bylaws.

Chapter II: Members

Article 5

The Association is open to anyone who shares in its values, principles, inspirations, and actions.

Article 6

The following are members of the Association:

- a) Natural persons or legal entities who make a written request and who are admitted by the General Assembly;
- b) Honorary members, appointed by the General Assembly upon proposal by the Committee;
- c) The WCRC, which is a member of the Association by right. It appoints a representative to the General Assembly.

Article 7

Membership in the Association is revoked upon a member's death, resignation, expulsion, or non-payment of dues. A member who resigns or is expelled remains bound by his obligations to the Association until the end of the current year.

Article 8

Members pay annual dues, except for honorary members who are exempted from this requirement. A member who does not pay the annual dues for two consecutive years is deemed to have resigned.

If there are just grounds, the President may exceptionally exempt a member from paying all or part of the annual dues for a specific period of time.

Article 9

Any member whose conduct jeopardizes the interests, the proper functioning, or the honor of the Association, may, after having been heard, be expelled from the Association by decision of the Committee, which will be rendered without providing any reason. This decision may be appealed to the General Assembly within 30 days.

Article 10

Members are not responsible for the financial obligations of the Association or the Center. They have no right to the assets of the Association.

Article 11

The Association shall not incur any civil liability as a result of an accident of which a member is the victim, nor as a result of an accident involving a third party and caused by one of its members.

Chapter III: Financial Resources

Article 12

Financial resources come from:

- a) Emoluments and rentals collected;
- b) Various activities organized by the Association;
- c) Donations, legacies, and grants;
- d) Membership dues;
- e) Income from assets.

The fiscal year coincides with the calendar year.

Chapter IV: Structure

Article 13

The structure of the Association includes:

- a) The General Assembly;
- b) The Committee;
- c) The Officers;
- d) The Oversight Body.

Chapter V: The General Assembly

Article 14

The General Assembly is the highest decision-making body of the Association. It is composed of all of the members, each of which is entitled to one vote.

A member may give a proxy to another member in order to represent him and vote on his behalf at a General Assembly. In no case may any one member hold more than two proxies. Proxies must be in writing and signed and are given to the secretary for validation at the beginning of the Assembly. They are recorded in the minutes.

Article 15

The General Assembly is convened by the Committee on an ordinary basis once a year during the first semester, and on an extraordinary basis whenever

circumstances require it or when at least one fifth of the members request it. The request must be made in writing and must state the reasons for it.

The meeting notice must be made in writing, give a minimum notice of 20 working days, and include the agenda. If a member wishes to submit a proposal to be voted on by the Assembly, he must send it to the President at least 5 days before the date of the Assembly.

Article 16

The General Assembly is held regularly regardless of the number of members present. No decisions may be taken on matters not included in the agenda.

The General Assembly is presided over by the President or the Vice President or, in their absence, by a member of the Committee, appointed by the former. The President of the Assembly appoints the Secretary.

Decisions are taken by a simple majority of votes, by a show of hands, unless one third of the members present request a secret ballot. In the event of a tie, the President of the General Assembly casts the deciding vote.

Article 17

The General Assembly has the authority to:

- a) Approve the Committee's annual report;
- b) Approve the annual financial statements;
- c) Grant discharge to the outgoing Committee and Oversight Body;
- d) Admit and, if necessary, expel members;
- e) Appoint honorary members;
- f) Elect the President and the members of the Committee;
- g) Appoint the Oversight Body;
- h) Determine the amount of the annual membership dues;
- i) Modify these bylaws in accordance with Article 22;
- j) Dissolve the Association and allocate its net assets in accordance with these bylaws.

Chapter VI: The Committee

Article 18

The Committee is composed of the President, the Vice-President, the Treasurer, and the Secretary, as well as of a minimum of 4 members, but a maximum of 12, elected by the General Assembly. Each determines his own role. The Committee meets at least 4 times a year.

The Director of the Center participates in the meetings of the Committee in an advisory capacity.

The term of office for the President and the members of the Committee is 2 years, and each may be immediately re-elected 4 times.

A member of the Committee may resign at any time by informing the Committee of his decision in writing. The resignation takes effect ten days after receipt of the written notice.

Article 19

The Committee has the authority to, in particular:

- a) Direct activity in accordance with the bylaws and the decisions of the General Assembly;
- b) Propose and implement the strategy and general policy of the Center;
- c) Appoint the persons who may act on the Association's behalf and who have signing authority;
- d) Represent the Association externally;
- e) In case of resignation of a member, appoint a replacement until the next General Assembly;
- f) Appoint members having advisory roles.
- g) In general, the Committee has all the powers not assigned to other bodies of the Association by law or through these bylaws. It shall delegate certain of its tasks to the Officers and to the Director of the Center as specified in internal regulations.

Chapter VII: The Officers

Article 20

The Committee shall appoint from among its members a Vice-President, a Treasurer, and a Secretary, who, together with the President, are the Association's Officers. Internal regulations, approved by the Committee, define the role of each.

The Director of the Center participates in Officer meetings in an advisory capacity.

Officers manage day-to-day business and prepare the plenary sessions. They handle matters delegated to them in a general manner by the Committee and those that must be dealt with without delay. They meet as often as necessary for the smooth functioning of the Center without hindering the work of the management, but at least 6 times a year.

Chapter VIII: The Oversight Body

Article 21

The accounts are audited by an Oversight Body that submits a written report to the

General Assembly. The Oversight Body has access to all information and documents necessary to fulfill its duty.

An Oversight Body is appointed each year by the General Assembly upon proposal by the Committee and may be immediately reappointed 4 times. The Oversight Body must be present at the ordinary General Assembly.

Chapter IX: Required Majorities

Article 22

Decisions are taken by a majority of the members of the General Assembly, subject to Paragraphs 2 and 3 of this Article. In the event of a tie, the president of the meeting casts the deciding vote.

A majority of the members of the Association is required for all amendments to the bylaws. A proposal for an amendment must be attached to the meeting notice.

A two-thirds majority of the members of the Association is required to dissolve the Association and allocate its net assets.

If the required majority cannot be reached due to the number of members of the Association, the Committee must convene a new General Assembly within one month, at which point decisions will be taken by a majority of the members of the Assembly.

Chapter X: Dissolution

Article 23

In the event of dissolution of the Association, its available net assets will be allocated to at least one other association that pursues a public interest goal similar to that of the Association and that holds tax-exempt status.

Under no circumstances may the assets be returned to the founders or members, nor may they be used for their benefit, in whole or in part, in any manner whatsoever.

The above bylaws were adopted by the General Assembly on June 3, 2019.

Ecumenical Greetings

Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW)

Esteemed Presidents and Bishops, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is my great pleasure to be able to address you today at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. I bring with me the warm greetings of my colleagues in our office in Hamburg. And I would also like to let you know that our Board is accompanying your meeting here in South Africa with prayers and best wishes. We celebrate with you the fact that it is possible to meet again, in person, after such a long time apart. While the pandemic has taught us to use alternative forms of communication, no video conference can replace meeting face to face with brothers and sisters. I'm sure you will enjoy seeing each other, eating together, praying and celebrating!

The theme of your conference is "Covenanting in God's Mission" and you have based your choice of topic on a text from the prophet Hosea. There it is written: "I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety (Hosea 2.18)"

God makes a covenant with the whole of creation, including humans and animals in this covenant. Truly this is a holistic view, which we ourselves can practice again and again to day, in the 21st century. Furthermore, the Lover of Life will break the life threatening weapons, with God promising peace and safety for humans and animals.

What a powerful and hopeful vision!

From my perspective, covenantal commitment and the pursuit of justice are among the fundamental theological emphases of the Reformed tradition.

And we are grateful that our Reformed brothers and sisters continue to bring this focus into our discussions. As covenant partners, we are mandated to witness and engage for justice among people, and for the integrity of God's creation. Therefore, we seek conversation with brothers and sisters from the margins, we learn from them, and we strive to act together. We pray and work for justice and peace to embrace each other, and for reconciliation not to remain an empty promise.

The Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany gladly accompanies the World Communion of Reformed Churches on your path. I am very grateful for the trustful and transparent communication with the brothers and sisters in the office of the World Communion in Hannover. We are happy to contribute to the success of the

planned General Assembly of the World Communion and look forward to personal encounters with the representatives of your member churches, be it in Germany or in other parts of the world.

For the Executive Committee meeting, we wish you fruitful discussions and encouragement for the tasks ahead.

With warm greetings from Hamburg,
Yours sincerely,

Rainer Kiefer

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Disciple of Christ World Communion

Dear esteemed members of the Executive Committee of the WCRC,

I extend warm greetings on behalf of the Disciples of Christ from around the world. It is with great enthusiasm that we acknowledge your presence in Johannesburg, South Africa, as you gather in person from May 20-24. In the wake of the pandemic, we have come to appreciate the privilege of traveling and meeting face-to-face. Although modern technology has allowed us to remain connected as a community, nothing compares to the longing for human touch, shared meals, and joyous laughter that fellowship brings.

Please accept our heartfelt congratulations on your meeting, and may it be a resounding success. As you delve into the theme for this year's executive committee, "Covenanting in God's Mission," we find resonance with the Disciples' own journey of discernment in becoming God's church in our time and space within God's covenantal relationship. The call to unity as followers of Christ transcends our own self-interests and directs us toward serving the world. In a time of shifting paradigms and a world in need, the Church is sought after for its ability to truly speak to and for all humanity and creation, offering solace and hope.

We live in a society rife with polarization, where comfort zones are sought and interaction with others is limited. We recognize that agreement on all matters is unattainable. However, we firmly believe that we can still be a community even amidst disagreement, bound together by our covenantal relationship. This relationship calls us to walk hand in hand, toil shoulder to shoulder, and remain committed to one another, regardless of the challenges we face.

Without a doubt, the WCRC stands as an exemplary model of such a relationship. We are inspired by your dedication to fostering unity, trust, and sacrifice for the greater

purpose of God's mission. In a world marred by strife, conflicts, environmental crises, and economic injustices, the Church is called upon to walk alongside the marginalized, collaborating with Christians and other faith communities to heal our fragmented world. Such an endeavor can only be accomplished by recognizing and embodying the covenantal relationship that reflects God's love, as revealed in Christ, to the world.

As you embark on this important meeting, know that our prayers accompany you. May God's wisdom and guidance permeate every discussion, decision, and interaction. May the Spirit of unity, humility, and love fill your hearts as you discern how best to live out your faith in covenant for God's mission.

With heartfelt wishes for a fruitful gathering,

Rev. Paul S. Tché
General Secretary
Disciples of Christ World Communion (DECC)

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Evangelical Church in Germany

Dear Madame President,
dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

it is a great honor and pleasure to participate in the meeting of the Executive Committee, to experience the fellowship with Reformed Churches and to share what the Triune God has granted to us: a life of faith, hope and love.

It is a pleasure for me to convey cordial greetings from the Protestant Church in Germany, from EKD. In particular I bring greetings from the Head of the Council of EKD, Praeses Annette Kurschus, and from the Head of the Department for Ecumenical Relations and Ministries Abroad, Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber. The Protestant Church in Germany consists of 20 Regional Churches of Reformation in Germany: Reformed, Lutheran and United Churches. Our Churchwide Office is situated in the city of Hanover, not far away from the General Secretariat of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. We are happy to have you always as our neighbors.

“Covenanting in God’s mission”. The theme of this gathering refers to words of the prophet Hosea, in which he delivers the promise of God to renew his love for his people. It is a covenant also with the creatures and it will bring justice, mercy, and peace: God himself will remove bows and swords and war. In my European context people are longing for these times to come. And within the Churches of

Reformation in Germany we ask, how we can renew our witness for God's peace in a situation, in which an unacceptable military aggression has changed the political agenda and the policies also in our own country. While we are "covenanting in God's mission", we humbly ask and listen, we need to speak and act – and more than all to pray.

While we are "covenanting in God's mission", we are not alone. As his people we are united through God's love and we as German Churches are thankful for the solidarity that we experience in the fellowship with our ecumenical partners. I convey my special thanks to the Reformed Churches that are hosting us here in South Africa. May the Triune God bless the spiritual life of his people in the Reformed Churches throughout the world. And while you as members of the Executive Committee are gathered to serve the Communion of your Churches, may God bless your blessed work.

Yours in Christ,

Reverend OKR Martin Puehn
Regional Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Ministries Abroad
Near and Middle East / Christian World Communions

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Evangelical Mission in Solidarity

Dear President Kassab,
Dear Members of the WCRC Executive Committee,
Dear collegial General Secretaries,
Dear sisters and brothers,

I greet you very warmly on behalf of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS). I send you greetings from the 25 member churches and 5 mission associations in EMS. Together we connect more than 25 million believers in the EMS Fellowship, many of them belonging to reformed churches.

In this post Easter time I greet you with the ancient Easter greeting:

Christ is risen. He is truly risen.

In his 2nd letter to Corinthians, Paul writes: *"The love of Christ urges us, for we are convinced that one died for all!" (2 Cor 5:14)* I personally like very much this understanding of Christian discipleship: Jesus himself always turned in a very special way to people who were poor or in need, oppressed or excluded. He healed the sick

and brought the dead back to life. He is the reason for our hope. His love urges us to follow his example.

In modern words we call this "solidarity". That is why the name "Evangelical Mission in Solidarity" describes our task very appropriately. It is important that our witness is not only words, but deeds. That is why EMS is an all-equal organisation and why we promote joint projects worldwide.

The Indian theologian Prof. Dr. Sathianatan Clarke always reminds us: Your image of God determines your mission! And he challenges us: Who is your God? Is your God a ruler in heaven, far away from people? Or is your God Jesus Christ, who travels with the poor, with the weak, who visits the outcasts to celebrate with them, who does not condemn sinners but opens up a new way to life? Your Christology determines our mission!

Easter gives us a new life. It opens up new possibilities. It makes us newborn children of a living hope. Let us share this message with others so that Christ's resurrection can change their lives too.

Christ is risen. He is truly risen!

I wish you a successful Executive Committee Meeting in Johannesburg and look forward to seeing you again in the near future.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Dr. Dieter Heidtmann
General Secretary, EMS

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Global Christian Forum

Executive Committee
World Communion of Reform Church

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, as you gather as an Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches to fellowship, worship, plan, and witness together. I pray that your time together in South Africa will leave all who gat her feeling renewed in your faith, your sense of community, and your commitment to service in God's world. May your theme, "Covenanting in God's Mission" compel you to solidarity and service in the hurting places of God's world.

This is an especially meaningful time, as it represents your first in-person meeting since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Much has changed in our world, yet the good news of Easter declares to us again that God has defeated the power of sin and death.

I greet you on behalf of the Global Christian Forum (a body that seeks to provide a space of welcome and hospitality for all communities within the Christian faith. The four pillars of GCF include: the World Council of Churches, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, World Evangelical Alliance, and Pentecostal World Fellowship. GCF focuses on bringing the various streams and families of Christianity together to share faith stories and build relationships. GCF provides an open space where the Spirit moves to bring people together in a community of belonging. We are grateful to have Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing as a member of our International Committee representing the WCRC.

At this time in the history of the world, we realize more than ever the deep interdependence of humanity and our shared need for the new life promised through Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ we look forward to the day when there will be no more sickness, no more violence, no more death; we look forward to the day when we will worship together as the whole family of God. When we gather in fellowship, we have the opportunity to glimpse, even briefly, the beauty of that glorious day.

We ask that you will also pray for us as we prepare for GCF's Global Gathering which will be held in Accra, Ghana during the week of April 15-20, 2024.

In Christ,
Revd Dr Casely Essamuah
Secretary, Global Christian Forum

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Lutheran World Federation

Respected President of the WCRC, Rev. Najla Kassab
Respected Officers and Members of WCRC Executive Committee
Respected Collegial General Secretariat

Dear sisters and brothers,

Greetings and blessings from the Lutheran World Federation in the name of Jesus Christ!

I rejoice with you all as you are able to finally meet again in person as the Executive Committee. I can imagine your own joy in seeing one another, discussing in live interaction, and sharing meals together. And I regret that neither I nor the Assistant

General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations are able to be present with you in these days. As you know, we are in the midst of preparing our Thirteenth General Assembly to be held in Krakow, Poland in September.

Over the past year, we have all been adjusting and adapting to new rhythms of life and work. Yet, in the midst of our schedules, the church is confronted with major concerns impacting all humankind and creation. The challenges of ministry continue to increase in a world that is more and more polarized, where extremisms of all sorts seem to gain power, where wars, senseless wars, continue to create suffering, where environmental concerns cannot be ignored, and where the struggle for justice is a constant struggle even in areas where we have long collaborated and advocated together, notably on women's rights and gender justice. God's covenant of justice and peace is continually rejected by other humanly created systems seeking only self-interest.

Our two communions have been searching how to live in God's covenant and co-participate in its call. We seek how to implement more fully the *Wittenberg Witness* (2017). The Study Group for the Freedom of Religion and Belief conference preparation is underway. This topic is more and more relevant as freedoms are often abused. What is claimed as a "right" is used to deny the rights of others. Again, God's covenant is ignored. It is good to always remember the spirit and the hope of the *Wittenberg Witness*, namely that both communions express together a new imagination, "to dream a different world, a world where justice, peace and reconciliation prevail" (Art. 5). This commitment is a form of covenanting in God's mission.

I give thanks to God for the close partnership with the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The theme of your meeting is particularly meaningful, as together we seek justice and peace not only amongst nations, communities, individuals but with all the cosmos. "I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground, and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety" (Hosea 2:18).

The Lutheran World Federation holds you in prayer as you discern your continued witness for justice and peace in the world. We hold in prayer your meeting as an Executive Committee and we hold in prayer the Collegial General Secretariat with whom we work closely and with great joy and friendship. We entrust this meeting and the important decisions you are making to the Triune God.

And we join you in confessing: "We believe that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Gen 9.8-12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace" (Accra Confession).

United in prayer,

Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt
General Secretary
The Lutheran World Federation

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Pentecostal World Fellowship

“Covenanting in God’s Mission” (Hosea 2:18)

“And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety.”

(Hosea 2:18 ESV)

“For you shall have a covenant...And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you.” **(Job 5:23 NKJV)**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Shalom greetings,

Thank you for giving me, as representative of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the opportunity to address the WCRC Executive Committee with an ecumenical greeting. The theme of your meeting “Covenanting in God’s Mission” allows me to reflect on the development of Reformed-Pentecostal relations.

Our respective Churches have in their history gone their different ways, whether in South Africa, Korea, or Brazil, just to mention three different contexts. They stood firm to their beliefs by stressing their proper convictions, developed in their varied ways of being part of the living Body of Christ. Not only have they upheld the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and worship, but they have also engaged in alleviating suffering and injustice in their neighbourhoods and abroad. But have they also been covenanting in God’s mission?

Especially as times are changing, we are realising that the relationships between Pentecostal and Reformed churches could be developed more to express their common calling to be part of God’s mission in the world.

Pentecostal churches affiliated with the Pentecostal World Fellowship have benefited from the international dialogue with the World Communion of Reformed Churches that has been in place for more than 25 years. In the last common

document, marking the end of the third round of this dialogue, both our teams have emphasised that our traditions are committed to God's mission. We have built mutual trust, we have deepened our understanding of each other's convictions, and discovered how we can witness together in many aspects of our faith especially as we address the needs of others that are treated unjustly and yearn for recognition, reconciliation, and peace.

This fact calls us to continue our mutual engagement as strategic partners in God's mission, so that we may grow in Christian unity for the sake of God's goodwill towards all creation. The Pentecostal World Fellowship wishes to see a continuation of the international dialogue between our two church families.

Indeed, it is also our prayer that God's New Covenant may give transformative hope in Christ Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God to all creation. In these challenging times, we need to learn to covenant with God's help in our common calling. May God bless you in your work within the WCRC. I pray that the Holy Spirit will give you wisdom, peace, and joy in all your deliberations.

Rev MS Khumalo
General Secretary of the AFM of SA

The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is a member of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, World Council of Churches and South African Council of Churches.

The AFM of SA is a classic progressive Pentecostal Church that was established in South Africa on 25 May 1908 and this month we are turning 115 years since its establishment. The AFM of SA became a united Church in 1996.

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Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity

Dear President Kassab,

It gives me great pleasure to greet you and all members of the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches as you gather for the Executive Committee meeting in Johannesburg. That you can gather in person for the first time in several years is indeed a cause for celebration. May it be an occasion of encounter, communion and witness.

In sending good wishes to your gathering on behalf of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, I give thanks for the growth in friendship and fraternity between Catholics and Reformed Christians in recent decades. As the Catholic Church seeks to become more authentically synodical, I am very grateful for the WCRC's contribution

to the *Listening to the West* conference in Rome in January of this year. I am particularly grateful to you, dear President Kassab, for your address on synodality in the Reformed tradition during the conference.

Meeting under the theme *Covenanting in God's Mission* and thinking about God's covenantal love for his people is an invitation to mirror that love. It is a call to treat our brothers and sisters, particularly the marginalised and the vulnerable, in ways that reflect the vision of the biblical passage on which your theme is based: "I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war in the land; and I will make you lie down in safety" (*Hos 2:18*). As you engage with this theme, the report of the fourth phase of the Catholic-Reformed International Dialogue, *Justification and Sacramentality: the Christian Community as an Agent for Justice* (2015), might offer some helpful inspiration:

Scripture asks not simply that people act fairly and consistently, treating others as they hope that they might themselves be treated, but to treat others as they themselves have already been treated. Christ delivered us at great cost from the peril of eternal death. We have been spared from a condemnation that would otherwise have been ours. From now on there is nothing for us but to live a life of gratitude. The standard of behaviour is set not by our wishes to be treated fairly but by Jesus' saving act of radical, self-sacrificing love. (§61)

May God richly bless this meeting of the WCRC Executive Committee and strengthen you all in his service.

Devotedly yours in Jesus Christ,

Kurt Cardinal Koch
President

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United Evangelical Mission

Executive Committee - World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)/South Africa.

Words of greetings on the behalf of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) by the UEM Executive Secretary for Africa Region, the Rev Dr John Wesley Kabango.

Dear Honourable members of the WCRC Executive Committee, dear sisters and brothers, dear participants to this assembly,

With the invitation extended to UEM, it is a great honour to give you greetings on the behalf of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM), Germany, especially the UEM Co-

workers, the Management Team and the General Secretary, the Rev Volker Martin Dally who could not make it to be here.

The UEM 5 working areas - Evangelism, Diaconia, Advocacy, Development and Partnership are very much similar and aiming at fulfilling the theme of this meeting which is a positive challenge to each church: "Covenanting in God's Mission" (Hosea 2:18), churches should aim to. **In 2021, it was 25 years of UEM members in three continents being "United in Mission"**. The UEM in its present form emerged from the work of the Rhenish Mission, the Bethel Mission and the Zaire Mission. UEM 39 members today are Protestant churches in Africa, Asia and Germany and the *von Bodelschwingh Foundations Bethel*, which have been working together in holistic mission on an equal footing since 1996.

UEM members from Africa, Asia and Germany have the same rights when it comes to financial and political decisions within the organization. The expression of this equality is the Council, which is composed on the basis of parity, and the General Assembly of the UEM, which is composed according to the delegate principle and in which UEM African and Asian members form the majority. The 39 UEM members are committed to striving for God's holistic mission in the world where:

- God has the greatest power and that the humanity can rely on him. God wants life for people and not death or sadness and where he is always with all people until all eternity. God is also with animals and plants.
- Happiness and peace spread; people do not remain in hunger and misery and kill each other.
- Where Jesus helped people, healed them and renounced violence. All people are of equal value to Jesus. He helped those who were in need and died for mankind. He is risen; because through him a new spirit has come into the world. I believe in the holy Christian church, that no one is oppressed and all people are considered equal.
- I people believe in the Holy Spirit whose power is at work in the church and protects us all, connects and gives us courage for justice, recognition and to fight for peace in the world. As Christians, it is always good to remind ourselves that - God stands in covenantal relationships with the marginalized and the vulnerable, and we are called to stand where God stands.

In this sense, the UEM holistic mission is directed towards covenantal relationships as well as it emerges from covenanting for Justice, Peace and Integrity of the Creation.

In September 2022, the UEM General Assembly hosted by the UEM German members at the Evangelical Church in Westphalia approved the theme presented by the UEM German members for the next six years: **"Beam in our Eye: Discrimination in the Church and Diaconia"** which clearly says: **It is taken from this verse: "You**

hypocrite! First, remove the beam out of your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye." (Mt. 7:3). I was delighted to read the theme of the WCRC "Covenanting in God's Mission" (Hosea 2:18) and I relate to the UEM General Assembly: **"Beam in our Eye: Discrimination in the Church and Diaconia."** The recent UEM Africa Regional Assembly held in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania- Eastern and Coastal Diocese in Dar es Salaam took time to reflect on the UEM theme. Church leaders and delegates discovered: They are convinced that the Church, knowingly or unknowingly, may be discriminating against other people.

The Church naively or out of ignorance, discriminates. As we already know from many challenges in the church, the church tends to discover its challenges – "beams" in her eyes' ' - after years and years. The Africa regional assembly looked at the General Feelings of Discrimination in our UEM member Churches. Discriminatory feelings are widespread in church circles even today. It is probably not strange, then discrimination was a sociological issue even before the time of Jesus.

UEM members are convinced that the church through its mission (preaching, liturgy, diaconia, and koinonia - partnership) has faced challenges that include discrimination. Discrimination in the church is like a **"beam in her own eyes"** because it is detrimental to the church's teaching. Discrimination represents an insult to God's Creation. It doesn't only prevent people from experiencing God's love, but it deprives the church of its legitimacy to exercise its prophetic role. The Bible shows that God hates discrimination in all its forms. We are all invited to join the campaign: **"God hates discrimination, join Him"**. It is always not too late. This means ensuring our churches adopt necessary corrective measures for such crimes against humanity happening in our esteemed churches. It is about the churches creating awareness of the problem, and facing the pain discrimination has caused through open "conversations, advocacy and activism". For the victims this may mean registering an open apology, involving the victims in working for strategies against discrimination, providing resources for training and research, advocacy, and other forms of lobby work to ensure a free-discriminatory environment in our churches. Eventually, we should accept the impact caused by discrimination – **trauma - a living Beam in our eyes.**

The church should engage herself to research on the contextual ways of dealing with discrimination and trauma caused by discrimination. **Thank you for your attention!!**

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World Council of Churches

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As you gather for this meeting of your Executive Committee, I greet you warmly on behalf of the World Council of Churches (WCC), and pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit will guide and accompany you in your deliberations.

The World Council of Churches has been privileged to have the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) as an invaluable partner. Our longstanding visible cooperation in many areas has made a difference for so many people in so many ways.

We have worked together for an Economy of Life. Through our joint work for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA), we analyse the signs of the times for the economy and the earth, identify emerging and persisting elements of economic and climate injustice and the key issues ahead, and take new actions and partnerships. All of this is underscored by our shared prayers, deep discernment, and earnest dialogue as collaborators.

Our work for peacebuilding and reconciliation, joining churches' efforts in the Korean Peninsula and Colombia, for example, is of vital importance to the WCC and its member churches. We each persist because the other persists.

Members of the WCRC were actively involved in our 11th assembly held last year in Karlsruhe, Germany. From committees to plenaries, as well as support to the assembly communication team, reformed voices helped to shape the experience and message of the event. We are profoundly grateful for your voice.

We are also thankful for your leadership in the recent Global Peace Prayer, as Christians across the world drew together to pray for peace in a broken world, and to listen to voices from people suffering in Ukraine and other conflict-ridden areas. You have helped us to witness how God is on the side of the oppressed.

On a personal note, allow me to share immense gratitude for the words shared by the Rev Dr Hanns Lessing on the occasion of my installation as WCC general secretary earlier this year, as he recalled my time as WCRC president and pledged the Communion's loyalty and friendship. I often recall these words and strive to be ever-worthy of this friendship.

As you know, I was deeply touched by the Commissioning Service, prayers and blessings the WCRC President and general secretaries offered over me as the general secretary-elect of the WCC at the Assembly in Karlsruhe. I will never forget this moving and inspiring event.

I remember fondly my time as President of the WCRC from 2010 – 2017 and the formidable and engaging work we undertook together and the impact of the WCRC

on the lives of many people within the Communion, ecumenical movement and across the globe. My prayer is that you would continue to remain steadfast and firm in your ministry, witness and service to the world, especially in difficult and challenging times.

May we continue working, walking, and praying together as we continue to craft a prophetic stance in our understanding of the church and its mission in society. I pray that you would have a blessed and Holy Spirit inspired and led meeting as you deliberate and decide on important matters this week.

Yours, in Christ

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay
General Secretary
World Council of Churches

Constitution and Membership Committee

1. In the absence of a General Secretary

Following a summary of the current situation by V-P and a status report of where we stand constitutionally by Phillip Peacock Committee had a very detailed and in-depth discussion regarding legal, practical and time-line feasibility of proposed changes. We believe that this is a constitutional change – if so requires member churches to be advised by early 2025. This does however mean a delay in approval and implementation. Should this therefore come to ExecComm as a bye-law change – ExecComm may approve with 66 % in favour.

Suggested action – present to ExecComm for approval to forward to General Council for constitutional approval.

Suggested amendment: **In the absence of a General Secretary, the Officers of WCRC are empowered to appoint from the current Executive Secretaries an Acting General Secretary. This decision should be presented for approval at the next Executive Committee.**

2. Virtual Executive Committee

For the bylaws – insert an amendment:

WCRC Officers are empowered, when necessary, to approve organising and holding virtual meetings (for example, Executive Committee).

3. Delay period for General Council

There was discussion of implication of delayed General Council on WCRC Officer term lengths, relationship with member churches and engagement with projects and actions. WCRC Officers, Executive Committee members and member churches should be made aware of potential extension of roles and any financial obligations on accepting these roles.

It was therefore suggested an amendment be added:

The timing of General Council should not be delayed beyond a maximum period of 2 years. In the event of an envisaged longer delay WCRC Officers in discussion with the Executive Committee are empowered to call a virtual gathering to deal with urgent and important decisions.

4. Membership Applications

Number of applications received – Committee propose that for those applications where all information has been provided, the membership criteria have been met,

and appropriate and supportive statements have been received from churches in the region, churches having submitted applications should be accepted as Associate and Full Member as appropriate.

Reformed Partnership Fund Committee

Present: Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, Raíssa Brasil (moderator), Coutinho Moma, Milceades Pua; Muna Nassar, Phil Tanis

Phil provided an overview of the current status of the Partnership Fund, including both the administrative issues and the cuts in funding.

Samuel noted that the Partnership Fund provides support to the grassroots and is a tangible demonstration of our work with churches. It makes a real impact to those who receive the projects.

Brot für die Welt is now supporting the GRAPE project (having previously provided money to the Partnership Fund, which it no longer will do). Muna noted that to expand the project, more funds will be needed, and *Brot für die Welt* is open to providing such.

Coutinho agrees that giving up on the Partnership Fund would be a loss to the Communion. It has been a way for the churches to bring empowerment to its people. If there are new ways to fund it, these should be found.

Raíssa agreed with the Fund's importance but raised concerns about finding new funding as well as reporting issues.

Phil clarified that OPM will no longer support the Partnership Fund and that Westphalia money is insufficient. Thus, a new donor must be found if the Fund is to continue.

Samuel wonders what other ways we can make our presence felt and impactful at the grassroots.

Discussion returned to reporting challenges. It was suggested that a meeting face-to-face would be more helpful than online training. Also, general secretaries (or heads of churches) should be signing the contracts.

Suggestions: rename the Partnership Fund to the Church Project Fund – change the name and include it in the fundraising efforts of the Communion.

Recommendation: That the Reformed Partnership Fund be renamed as the Church Project Fund (or something similar) and that donations be sought within the strategic fundraising efforts of the WCRC. Once sufficient funds have been raised, churches will again be invited to submit project proposals.

Drafting Team Report: General Council Planning Committee

1) *the 2025 General Council will gather for ten days*

In the overall there is a positive attitude towards a reduced number of days for General Council, exactly what that number of days should be was not offered.

A much stronger view is that reducing from 13 to 10 days is just shortening the number of days without any meaningful reason to do so save reduced expenditure. As well, it was noted that its much of a chicken and egg situation as budget is central to this question of number of days.

There is consensus for a re-imagining of General Council for 2025. This could include a relook at all the thematic areas and consider a reprioritization of these as well as new ways to engage with them.

It was suggested that there needed to be a look at what could constitute in person sessions versus utilizing technology for others.

Recommendation: That the General Council Planning Committee go back to the drawing board with a relook at the programmatic design of General Council 2025. That the number of days of General Council is shortened is determined through a process of re-imagining what General Council could look like utilizing in person and Zoom spaces to deliver the overall programme.

2) *the caucuses of groups that at previous General Councils had gathered in pre-councils shall be included in the General Council programme*

There is a mix of views on retaining Pre-Council gatherings (caucuses) or inclusion of all caucuses in the General Council programme. The thinking for supporting inclusion in the General Council program is that it would allow for intersectionality. However, given the recommendation for #1 this is best subsumed in the process of re-imagining the General Council which may in fact have these groups (or some) meeting via Zoom with reporting coming to the General Council during its in person sessions.

The question was also raised whether there can be a process for groups who may wish to meet beyond those determined by WCRC. An example could be a caucus of ecumenical partners. Can there be a process for this to take place?

Recommendation: That the General Council Planning Committee note the view of retaining Pre-Council caucus groups as a part of overall design. However, this comes in the context of the broader recommendation of re-imagining what General Council could look like and how these would fit into that design. Additionally, that consideration is given to assignment of space potentially for partners who may

wish to 'meet' within the confines of the General Council space. The process for this would have to be clearly mapped out.

- 3) *the following groups shall convene in special caucus groups: women, youth, Indigenous people, people with disabilities.*

There was consensus on the special caucus groups. However, concern was raised that in hosting a caucus for persons with disabilities, consideration must be given to providing accommodation for persons with physical and neurodiversity issues.

Recommendation: That the special caucus groups be made up of: women, youth, indigenous people and people with disabilities.

Nomination and Public Issues Processes

The Executive Committee requests the Officers' Committee to appoint two planning groups that prepare the work of the Nominations and the Public Issues committees at the General Council:

- 1) The Leadership Advisory Group shall discern the profiles of people needed to be considered for nomination to the Executive Committee and will accompany the process of nominations of General Council delegates in the member churches to ensure that suitable candidates will be present at the General Council meeting.

The wording of the correspondence sent to member church on this needs to be clear given that this has not been done before. Member churches should be clear that sending a delegate to the General Council who meet the criteria for a position on the Executive was not a nomination to a position rather that the Nominations process takes place at the General Council. They should also be reminded of their funding commitment if a delegate from their church accepts a position on the Executive Committee.

This group should have access to the individuals (or any correspondence available) involved with the Nominations process in the last 2 General Councils. This would help to ensure that the design of this process and its support to the nominations process is enhanced by the learnings therefrom.

Finally, that said correspondence sent to member churches must be shared with regions so that they can support this process.

Recommendation: That the Leadership Advisory Group be set up as detailed in the submission above. That care is taken to ensure that member churches understand that the nominations process takes place at the General Council only and that the correspondence sent to them is shared with regions.

- 2) The Public Issues Planning Group shall reach out to member churches to collect issues of concern, develop a methodology for the hearings, and develop a strategic approach to the public issues report.

The constitution is silent on how this works. There is a view that this planning group is unnecessary while others had no difficulty with its continuation. It is said that most of the issues brought forward by member churches tend to be very localized which limits the ways that WCRC can meaningfully engage with them.

If the concept of Public Issues is to be continued as a part of the General Council process, the consideration is that this planning group would set deadlines for submissions from member churches and other such arrangements for hearings and the necessary processes for the design of the Public Issues report.

Recommendation: That the Public Issues Planning Group be set up to design the processes which among other things govern the setting of deadlines for submissions from member churches and other such arrangements for holding hearings and for the design of the Public Issues report.

The General Council Budget

The Executive Committee approves the creation of a Communion Council Budget for the 2025 General Council and affirms:

General comments to the whole area of Fundraising.

There is deep concern that the matter of fundraising is built on assumptions that most member churches know what/who WCRC is and are committed to its sustainability. There is also the awareness that in some cases national churches may not have the funds but across the church there are possible ways to engage with its entities where funding may be available. To this point however it was noted that movements in these spaces needed to be done with sensitivity with regard to polity. The concern too is that in many instances member churches have grown accustomed to being subsidized which impedes the process of asking them to do fundraising now. It was noted that efforts at the local level would likely be done to raise funds for the sponsorship of their delegates which does not take into account the significant costs of holding a General Council otherwise.

When one acknowledges that only 7 member churches contribute to the costs of WCRC there is much work to be done to grow the awareness necessary to gain the momentum for fundraising. To initiate this process the Ask from member churches must be detailed and clear.

It was brought up too that in the case of some churches, budgets for 2024 have already been finalized. All this points to the fact that the fundraising conversation with member churches needs to start urgently. It also raises the critical need to work more strategically effecting a fundraising network within all regions in support of this and other efforts.

Specific recommendations fall below each item below.

Fundamentally, to achieve sufficient funding to host GC regions need to be fully engaged.

- 1) the development of a fundraising system for the General Council that allows for the donation of smaller contributions for dedicated activities of the General Council. Such a system shall include the necessary instruments for accounting and communication with the donors;

Recommendation: There is a need to develop a fundraising plan which has multiple tiers and which allows member churches and individuals to see possibilities to support the General Council. This takes into consideration both large and small donation packages, but the level of detail which the plan would include should allow member churches to see what their funding support would achieve rather than simply then giving money for the General Council blindly. Accounting and communication remain as important components of this planning process.

- 2) the production of resources for fundraising within the member churches and with potential partners that articulate the relevance of the General Council for different audiences;

Recommendation: Development of a strategic fundraising plan which would have close coordination with regions and their fundraising networks and other partners. Resources as needed would be created specific to a particular region/need.

- 3) that all General Council delegates pay a registration fee of 300 euros for subsidized delegates and 500 / 750 euros for self-supporting delegates (please indicate which amount you will find most appropriate);
- 4) a minimum contribution of 700 euros from every delegate who asks for a subsidy for travel and accommodation;

Recommendation (#3 and 4 fall have been combined in this recommendation): That subsidized delegates would pay a registration fee of 300 euros and 700 euros as a contribution for a total of 1000 euros of their cost with WCRC picking up the remainder and self-supporting delegates pay a registration fee of 500 euros only.

- 5) the creation of a Just Participation Fund that will support the participation of women and youth delegates. The Executive Committee calls upon all member churches to support this fund generously;

Recommendation: This was seen as conceptually sound but requires its own strategic fundraising approach. It needs to be costed so that member churches or individuals can be clear how their support will support the presence of women and youth at the General Council. In this consideration the matter of support to Indigenous people and persons with disabilities is noted as being absent and should be included.

- 6) that the regions under the supervision of the General Council Coordinator identify fundraising consultants that will accompany the churches in their fundraising activities for the General Council.

Recommendation: This item is covered in recommendation 2.

Drafting Team Report: Committees

General Comment

None of the groups addressed the items marked in yellow.

Leadership Structure

Preamble: The matter of the CGS model cannot be discussed without expressing gratitude to the four Executive Officers who have worked tirelessly covering a lot of ground and, in particular, during the pandemic.

To the matter of the recommendation before the Discernment Groups, there was a general feeling of discomfort with the wording of the recommendation.

Aside from this point, there was, on the one hand support for doing away with the CGS model with a leaning towards looking externally first for a candidate rather than internally. At the same time, the question was asked why get rid of it and, if so, look internally first. In the overall, there was no clear, unambiguous response to this recommendation across the Discernment Groups. That said, feelings were strong in both groups.

Notwithstanding this, there was consensus that there is need for senior leadership, i.e. someone in the capacity of the General Secretary position as we move towards the General Council in 2025.

The matter of appointing an existing Executive Secretary to this position it was felt would require that the work of the remaining three Executive Secretaries would have to be re-prioritized to account for this.

With respect to the appointment of an Interim General Secretary questions raised included what qualifications and competencies would be required by an individual to fill this interim position and for what time period this would run. It was felt too that these things needed to be clarified early on so that interested parties were clear about the role responsibilities and other matters which this Interim position would attract. In particular, it was noted that one such specific deliverable would be fundraising towards General Council 2025

The other concern was with the timeframe of two months to action this. It was felt that it would be best to put this forward with urgency recommending it's done as soon as possible rather than setting what may be an unrealistic timeframe.

In all this what was noted was that there is no mention of plans for further discussion about a regularization of the General Secretary position for the longer term. This

needs to become a priority for the new Executive Committee immediately after the General Council with preparatory work being done leading up to their appointment so that as little time as possible is lost in settling this matter.

Recommendation: The Discernment Groups did not conclude with a clear pathway to address the leadership issue before them. In light of this, it is being recommended therefore that this matter be taken up in an in camera session of the Executive Committee. It is further recommended that the issues raised in the Preamble are brought before the Executive Committee so that they can further engage them to arrive at a way forward.

Process Recommended:

- 1) With great thanks from the WCRC for all that has been accomplished in this interim, the Collegial General Secretariat will conclude its mandate upon the election of an acting general secretary, with the election to happen at the earliest possible date.
- 2) The process to elect an acting general secretary, who will serve through the 2025 General Council, will be as follows:
 - a) A special committee will be named to recommend a candidate as acting general secretary.
 - b) The four executive secretaries who currently compose the CGS will each be interviewed for consideration by this committee.
 - c) If none of them are named as the candidate, the committee will work to invite a veteran church leader with full familiarity with the work of WCRC and with proven success in leading organizations, raising funds, and supervising a multicultural team.
 - d) Once a candidate is selected for recommendation, the WCRC Executive Committee will meet in a virtual extraordinary session to vote on the nominee.
- 3) Once elected, the acting general secretary will start at the earliest date possible, with the CGS concluding its service at that time.
- 4) Given the importance and urgency of this action the Committee recommends that this occurs within two months, if at all possible, of the Executive Committee's approval.

Developing Fundraising Strategies

- 1) A fundraising strategy needs to be developed for the WCRC which would include the following:
 - a. Clear responsibilities of both the global (including the Executive Committee) and regional bodies to guide cooperative work to strengthen the Communion in this area.

Preamble: There was only one concern raised in respect of this issue and that is there needs to be sensitivity applied to where there are no regional networks.

Recommendation: That a fundraising strategy be developed for the WCRC which would come into effect post the General Council and include the following:

- b. Clear responsibilities of both the global (including the Executive Committee) and regional bodies to guide cooperative work to strengthen the Communion in this area.
 - c. Keeping in mind the diversity of the Communion, customized approaches either regionally or nationally to best engage with regions, members, congregations, and individuals
 - d. Fundraising materials, including brochures, videos, etc., along with the use of current technologies and media.
 - e. Communion-wide fundraising efforts, such as the annual appeal and the developing Reformation/WCRC Sunday, both of which should not only be continued but also expanded.
- 2) The study of how staff might be located around the world should be continued (including the possibility of secondment or “housing” by member churches). Such a study should include consideration of the justice in different salary levels based on where staff members are situated.

Staffing Structures

- 1) While rejoicing and affirming the staffing expansion in the last two years, efforts in this direction need to be strengthened and pursued rigorously to have consultants or coordinators (for specific programmes, projects, and operations) supported or seconded by the members or regions or ecumenical partners.
- 2) At the conclusion of the term of the current executive secretary for communications and operations, the WCRC will either appoint an executive secretary for communications and development or hire two non-executives, one to focus on communications and the other on fundraising.

Preamble: There was a very firm view that there needs to be an Executive Secretary for Communications. Acknowledging the financial realities, it was felt that fundraising would have to be assigned to an existing staff member for the time being. It was also noted that it is critical for a fulsome handover from the current Executive Secretary for Communications to his successor and as such this recruitment process needs to be prepared for very soon.

Recommendation: That priority focus be given to appointing an Executive Secretary experienced in Communications. Recognizing the importance of a handover from the outgoing Executive Secretary for Communications, it is also recommended that planning for the recruitment process gets underway in a timely manner. To support the matter of fundraising, it is recommended that there is a refocus of the staffing arrangements allowing for assignment of fundraising to one of them.

Diversifying Communications

- 1) Regional councils should become a regular point of contact to share stories both from and to the global office.
- 2) Networks should be developed to support communication efforts, especially with member church communication departments, to increase the flow of stories between the Communion and its members (again, both ways); member churches should also be invited to second their communications staff on a part time basis.
- 3) The types of media regularly used should be increased, especially with the addition of video (which should be generated even from the grassroots levels following set guidelines); a network of Instagrammers should be developed to share pictures from around the Communion (following set guidelines).

Strengthening Regions

- 1) A brief and clear description of the responsibilities regarding the regions and the global office should be drafted and adopted by the Executive Committee and each Regional Council to guide cooperative work and strengthen the Communion.
- 2) Include representatives from the regions in the programme planning process, in addition to Executive Committee members from the regions. Sometimes there is no overlap between the two, and those leading in the regions do not see their hopes carried forward in the process.

- 3) Consider locating some of the programmatic work in particular regions where appropriate. This would enlarge the capacity of the Communion and also strengthen relations with the regions.
- 4) Understand and learn from the best practices of the regional councils.
- 5) In planning for General Council, consider what we have already received from the regions in the COVID & Beyond process, and bring that input to the fore.
- 6) In upcoming regional meetings, have a standing agenda item for regional requests for the solidarity of the wider communion, combined with a process of implementation.
- 7) Regional councils should be established in the areas where they do not yet exist.

Reconnecting with Membership

- 1) The Constitution and Membership Committee reviews categories of membership in the constitution and bylaws to allow a greater diversity of levels of engagement, including how membership within the regional councils functions.

Preamble: There was general agreement with this but the review process needs to include associate and affiliate membership categories as well and not just member churches. It was noted that in the case of some ecumenical partners there is not clarity with the understanding of what associate status with the WCRC actually means for them.

Recommendation: That item 1 be accepted save that the review process includes all our affiliate and associate members to ensure that such arrangements with them are clear and they are aware of what these arrangements are.

- 2) The Executive Committee (change to Constitution and Membership) 1) reviews the current levels of membership dues, 2) considers ways in which these dues can be “paid” (e.g. through in-kind donations), 3) conducts a “sustainability audit” of the Communion, the resources available, in the Communion and the possibilities that open or limitation that impose.

Preamble: This was accepted save that the name of the committee was changed to Constitution and Membership. It was noted that all gifts, cash and in-kind should be recognized with a thank you letter and, in the case of in-kind gifts that the value of

the gift should be stated in the correspondence and donors recognized on our website or social media unless donors state otherwise.

Recommendation: That this item is accepted save that the committee referred to be changed to Constitution and Membership. Additionally, it is recommended that all donors and particularly all in-kind donors are thanked and in that correspondence a dollar value assigned to the in-kind gift.

- 3) Members of the Executive Committee contact the heads of member churches in their regions, reaching out to nurture relations and facilitate their participation in the work of the WCRC.

Preamble: This was agreed with, save that it calls for an aligned approach with the global office.

Recommendation: That item 3 be accepted as stated save that in so doing there is an aligned working arrangement with the global office:

Preparing for General Council

- 1) The programmatic plan leading to the 2025 General Council is affirmed, with these programmatic activities taking priority until then: COVID & Beyond process, consultations on empire and identity, programs and activities that engage youth, the Decade for Climate Justice, thematic preparatory work on the Council's theme.
- 2) The General Council Planning Committee should look at what the planning means for the question of the "why" and the questions of what the ecumenical movement has to offer, relying on the widest possible participation of member churches.

Constitution and Membership Committee

- 1) In the absence of a General Secretary, the Officers of WCRC are empowered to appoint from the current Executive Secretaries an Acting General Secretary. This decision should be presented for approval at the next Executive Committee.

Preamble: As this recommendation is worded it was found problematic. The recommendation contains a rewording of same.

Recommendation: When the position of General Secretary becomes vacant due to exigent or emergency situation, the Officers of the WCRC are empowered to

appoint an Acting General Secretary until such time as the Executive Committee can be convened to determine the way forward.

- 2) WCRC Officers are empowered, when necessary, to approve organizing and holding virtual meetings (for example, Executive Committee).

Preamble: Whilst generally speaking this is agreed with, the question which arose was, are we clear about what we can legally do (make decisions, etc.) in a Zoom meeting particularly given that our office is located in Germany. Given that there was this question this item could not be concluded.

See recommendation below.

- 3) The timing of General Council should not be delayed beyond a maximum period of 2 years. In the event of an envisaged longer delay WCRC Officers in discussion with the Executive Committee are empowered to call a virtual gathering to deal with urgent and important decisions.

Preamble: The general view is that this item needs context and clarity for a clear reaction to be offered.

Recommendation: That items 2 and 3 be referred to the Constitution and Membership Committee for item 3 to be further reviewed and item 2 once clarified would become a part of the Bylaws be further interrogated before making it an addition to our Bylaws.

Reformed Partnership Fund Committee

That the Reformed Partnership Fund be renamed as the Church Project Fund (or something similar) and that donations be sought within the strategic fundraising efforts of the WCRC. Once sufficient funds have been raised, churches will again be invited to submit project proposals.

Preamble: A comment raised is that there is no need to change the name; the issue is about getting funds to put in the account. Another comment was that the fund be renamed Mission Project Fund.

The bigger point is that no matter what the entity is called it is encouraged to look for new sources of funding allowing member churches access to funds for projects.

Recommendation: In light of the fact that the Reformed Partnership Fund has been able to make significant contributions to member churches in the past it is recommended that the Committee be encouraged to look for new sources of funding going forward and that regions are involved in supporting this fund.

Message from the 2023 Executive Committee Meeting

The Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) met from 20-24 May 2023 in Johannesburg, South Africa, under the theme “Covenanting in God’s Mission.” This theme stands in the light of God’s new covenant with his people as proclaimed in Hosea 2:18-20:

And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me for ever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

We rejoice in meeting in person after only being able to meet virtually these last three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were especially pleased to be accompanied by many of our ecumenical partners. We thank our hosts, the member churches of the WCRC in South Africa, for their gracious hospitality. For us this is not an ordinary location. It is the place where the engagement with the South African churches during the time of apartheid shaped the self-understanding of the Communion as we know it today and gave it its true church identity. It is where the Belhar Confession was birthed, and the continent from which the Accra Confession sprang.

We once more commit ourselves to renew God’s covenant with us, in order to realize God’s mission by demonstrating love for God’s people and creation, seeking justice in God’s world. As Reformed people, we strive to keep reforming according to the Word of God, and therefore we continue to subject ourselves to a process of discernment—continuous self-examination with the purpose to test the spirits.

During the meeting of the Executive Committee, we took note of specific contexts of violence and injustice in Africa, of war in Sudan, Syria, Palestine, and Ukraine, paying attention to a newly developing, Cold War-oriented, geo-politico-economic order in the midst of the USA-China hegemonic struggle which critically affects people’s security in North East Asia. We were sensitized about global movements towards populism, fascism, and authoritarianism in a post-truth reality shaped by social media that threaten democracy.

We also heard from our South African hosts about the continuing challenges they face, including the need for educating the youth; a “brain drain,” of highly skilled people leaving the country; violence, fostered in inequality; and corruption on all levels of the government.

But we were inspired by a visit to Constitution Hill where, on the one hand, we saw the inhuman conditions prisoners were subjected to during the apartheid regimes and on the other hand, saw the commitment South Africans have made to equality through their Constitutional Court.

We were further inspired by presentations from the GRAPE—Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement—participants of Kenya and South Africa, who demonstrated both the need for and the power of advocating for justice.

We therefore call on our member churches to foster a just communion, and we call for the full and just participation of all those who have been excluded from our tables.

We call for those who have had their dignity stolen from them, who have been rejected and demeaned, to be at the centre of our spaces and our conversations.

We call on our member churches to covenant for justice and to work to remove inequalities, to dismantle patriarchy, and to stop the systemic exploitation of people and the earth.

We call on our member churches to adopt and support the calls of the Zacchaeus Tax campaign for tax justice and reparations which we relaunched in Africa during our gathering.

We call on our Communion members to proclaim and demonstrate how the gospel of Jesus Christ transforms us when we engage with God’s mission in contexts of crisis, giving hope to the world by humble and honest discernment, by fearless witness, and by boldly practicing justice.

With this spirit the Executive Committee invites our member churches to move together towards the 2025 General Council in Thailand under the theme “Persevere in your witness,” on a common journey for renewing our covenant in God’s mission.

As 2 Corinthians 4:8-11 states: “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our bodies.”



EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND
OBERRECHNUNGSAMT

(English version)

REPORT

ON THE AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2022

WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES
(WCRC)

HANNOVER

LIST OF IMPORTANT ABBREVIATIONS

BS.	Buchungsstelle (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
CWM	Council for World Mission / Rat für Weltmission
DVO.EKD	Dienstvertragsordnung der EKD (compensation regulation), new version from 25th August 2008 (ABI. EKD p. 341), last change on 6th September 2018 (ABI. EKD 2019 p. 74)
EKD	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Evangelical Church in Germany)
EMW	Evangelisches Missionswerk (Evangelical Mission society)
EUR	Euro (Currency code according to ISO 4217 for the Euro zone)
GG	Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Constitution for the Federal Republic of Germany)
KFM	Kirchliches-Finanz-Management (finance software of ECKD-KIGST-GmbH, Kassel)
Nds. BesG	Niedersächsisches Besoldungsgesetz (Remuneration Law of Lower Saxony)
Nds. MBl.	Niedersächsisches Ministerialblatt (official public announcement gazette)
NIFEA	New Economic and Financial Architecture
OPM	Otto per Mille
ORA	Oberrechnungsamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (High Audit Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany)
ORAG	Church law on the High Audit Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany of 12 th November 1993 (ABI. EKD p. 513)
RAN	Racism, Authoritarianism and Nationalism - Empire
SB	Sachbuchteil (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
TVöD	Tarifvertrag für den öffentlichen Dienst (Collective wage agreement in public service)
TVPöD	Tarifvertrag für Praktikantinnen/Praktikanten des öffentlichen Dienstes (Collective wage agreement for interns/trainees in public service)
Tz.	Textziffer (classification number of the content statements in this report)
UEK	Union Evangelischer Kirchen (Union of Evangelical Churches)
UK	Unterkonto (sub-account – classification level in the finance software KFM)
WGRK	Weltgemeinschaft Reformierter Kirchen (World Communion of Reformed Churches)
WGRK-Haus- haltsordnung	WCRC General Finance Management Policies
WRV	Weimarer Reichsverfassung (Weimar Constitution)

I. AUDIT BASICS

Audit assignment

According to article X section G. No. 4 in connection with article XIV section C of the constitution of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), it falls to the Executive Committee to accept and authorize (discharge) the audited year-end closing of the WCRC. The WCRC has instructed the High Audit Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany (ORA) to carry out the necessary auditing activities for this purpose.

The audit assignment is based on an administrative agreement reached between the WCRC and the EKD on 10th/11th December 2014. The Standing Budget Committee of the EKD synod approved the acceptance of this audit assignment in its conference on 12th/13th March 2014.

Audit subject and aim

The subject of the audit was the annual financial statement of the WCRC for the accounting year 2022. For this, it was precisely audited:

- whether the budget and economic management as well as the asset administration in the accounting year 2022 took place correctly and according to the relative principles and regulations (concerning the budget) and
- whether the annual accounts 2022 convey an appropriate image of the actual situation concerning the budget implementation as well as the assets, finances and results.

The correctness of accounting was the audit standard in this case. In this respect, the audit aim was to determine whether there were considerable differences between the amounts mentioned in the accounting and those proven in the books and whether the approval and authorization of the annual accounts as well as the approval of the WCRC General Treasurer and the WCRC General Secretary by the Executive Committee can be recommended.

Audit of the budget and economic management

In addition to the audit of the accounting, it is the assignment of the ORA to audit the budget and economic management of the WCRC. This specifically includes the administrative action which is not directly reflected in the annual accounts to be

presented. In this case, the audit standards are the correctness and cost effectiveness of the actions.

For this, it was precisely audited:

- whether the entrusted resources were deployed in an adequate, economic and thrifty way,
- whether and in which cases of relevance the regulations and principles applicable to the budget and economic management were not complied with and
- what recommendations for action are to be derived from the audit results for the future, if applicable.

As a whole, it is the intention of the audit to support the elected leadership and organs of the WCRC in the execution of their functions and to stimulate economic thinking as well as responsible action concerning the handling of the resources entrusted to the organization.

Type, extent and execution of the audit

The ORA carried out the audit based on a risk-oriented audit approach. Accordingly, the audit must be planned and executed in such a manner that any incorrectness and infringements in the accounting and the budget and economic management of the WCRC are recognized with adequate certainty. It was not the aim and task of the audit to trace discrepancies without significance in single cases or the whole.

The audit was carried out according to the dutiful judgment of the auditor in samples and according to certain foci. These were selected so that they allowed for the significance of the different audit topics, conveyed a meaningful image of the corresponding section and facilitated the conclusion as to whether applicable law had been complied with.

In this context, the following audit foci were determined:

- correctness and completeness of the annual financial statement (appropriate reproduction of the asset and result situation, adherence to the budget),
- inspection of various single aspects of the HR department,
- inspection of partial aspects of the internal monitoring system of the HR department and

- inspection of the contribution funds.

If any action was taken against existing regulations in the case of single measures and this remained without audit objections, no approval is to be deduced from this fact.

The audit was carried out by Ms. Tanja Fitzel in April and May 2023.

The following documents, among others, were available for the audit:

- the 2022 budget for the WCRC and
- the financial statement presentation (annual financial statement KFM, SB 00) including General Assembly (SB 02), advances and transit accounts (SB 52), advances and transit accounts of the General Assembly (SB 53), as well as the capital account (SB 92) for the budget year 2022 of 28th April 2023 (ZB closure no. 0101).

In addition to the WCRC files, especially the accounting documents (invoice documents and bank statements) were available. The records requested within the audit were either submitted or access to the corresponding documents was allowed.

The audit was carried out based on the WCRC budget code ("WCRC General Finance Management Policies"), which has already been applied from the financial year 2013 onwards and was officially put into effect by the Executive Committee of the WCRC at its meeting of 11th to 18th May 2014.

The information required on the occasion of the audit was provided by Ms. Anna Krüger (Administrator for Finance and Communication), Ms. Amritha Perumalla (Administrator for Projects and Programs) as well as Mr. Gerhard Plenter (Finance Coordinator and Supervisory Control; Evangelical Reformed Church). In addition, other staff members were available for further enquiries when necessary.

Completeness statement

To ensure the audit basics, the ORA requested a completeness statement from the WCRC for the financial statement 2022. It was given by the Acting General Secretary Dr. Hanns Lessing within the scope of this audit dated 8th May 2023.

Final discussion

A final discussion was mutually regarded as unnecessary.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) is a non-profit, international, non-governmental organization representing more than 230 member churches from over 100 countries with a total of approx. 100 million Christians as a united ecumenical body for Reformed churches. It developed from the association of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) in 2010 and succeeded them legally.

The WCRC status is that of a public body in terms of article 140 GG in conjunction with article 137 paragraph 5 page 2 WRV, awarded by the Federal Government of Lower Saxony, order issued on 11th December 2012¹. It is subject to state supervision by the Ministry of Culture of Lower Saxony. The WCRC is also registered as a 501(c)3 corporate body in the state of Michigan in the United States of America.

In addition, a contract for the regulation of issues corresponding to the legislative responsibility of the federal government was concluded between the Federal Republic of Germany and the WCRC dated 11th/14th April 2014. It was ratified by Federal Law on 10th December 2014.

The current WCRC constitution was approved by the Uniting General Council in 2010. A revised version was accepted by the General Council in the year 2017. The organization is officially based in Hannover, Germany.

In its self-concept, the WCRC follows the tradition of the Reformers John Calvin, John Knox and Huldrych Zwingli as well as the Reformation movements around Jan Hus and Pierre Valdo.

The mission of the World Communion of Reformed Churches is to foster its member churches in their community and support them in the social discussion. In addition, it is also to contribute to the ecumenical movement and the transformation of the world by standing up for economic and ecological justice, world-wide peace and reconciliation, promoting and protecting religious, civil and all other human rights; appealing for emergency relief and continuous development in the world and promoting them as well as pointing out Reformed perspectives for unity among the churches (see article V of the constitution).

¹ see announcement of the Ministry of Culture of Lower Saxony of 16th January 2013 (Nds. MBI 4/2013, page 67)

The organs of the WCRC are:

- the General Council (with President and General Treasurer),
- the Executive Committee and
- the General Secretary.

The Chief Executive Officer of the WCRC is the General Secretary elected by the Executive Committee. According to article XII of the constitution, he/she bears the responsibility for the management and coordination of their work towards the General Council and the Executive Committee. The position of General Secretary has been vacant since 1st September 2021. In substitution, the three Executive Secretaries have taken over as a "council". Dr. Hanns Lessing is authorized to sign in a representational function.

The WCRC President is Rev. Najla Kassab (Lebanon). The office of General Treasurer was assigned to Dr. Johann Weusmann (Germany).

The current transactions of the WCRC are assumed by an office directed by the General Secretary. It is based in Hannover (Germany).

The accounting year (budget year) is the calendar year.

III. ACCOUNTING / PRESENTATION OF THE ACCOUNTING RESULTS

The accounting was assumed by the Administrator for Finances of the WCRC and was carried out in the cameralistics accounting style using the software KFM – Kirchliches-Finanz-Management (of the company KIGST GmbH – Offenbach am Main, Germany).

The ORA did not check the software applied. Within the scope of the audit activities, however, there were no indications leading to the assumption that the application might contain essential errors.

According to general financial principles, the annual accounts are to convey an adequate image of both the asset and the result situation. This can be summarized as follows:

Presentation of the result situation

The accounts results of the audit period according to the documents presented for the audit and the result of the audit are as follows:

WGRK Annual Statement 2022	Revenues	Expenses
	EUR	EUR
Budget appropriation according to budget	2.805.300,00	2.805.300,00
TARGET COSTS 2022 (plan valuation)	2.805.300,00	2.805.300,00
According to the annual financial statement the following amount to:		
The actual receipts	1.449.649,34	
Internal reallocations between programmes (project subsidies)	676.605,84	
The transfers from program reserves	293.841,21	
The transfers from other reserves	280.796,70	
The transfers from Trust Asset	21.512,22	
The actual expenditures		1.619.645,18
Internal reallocations between programmes		676.605,84
The allocations to program reserves		120.380,82
The allocations to other reserves		95.380,82
The surplus 2022(allocation to General Reserve)		210.392,65
ACTUAL COSTS 2022 (result)	2.722.405,31	2.722.405,31

Advances and transit accounts

The advances and transit accounts of the WCRC (SB 52) were randomly audited.

The advances and transit accounts of the WCRC of the audit period according to the documents presented for the audit are as follows:

Identification	Opening balance from 2021 EUR	Expense 2022 EUR	Revenue 2022 EUR	Closing balance 2022 carried forward to 2023 EUR
Permanent Advance AIPRAL	-1.676,29	0,00	0,00	-1.676,29
ACRC Membership	-1.694,71	0,00	0,00	-1.694,71
Opening balance from projects	1.627.670,48	1.633.111,86	743.547,98	738.106,60
Total:	1.624.299,48	1.633.111,86	743.547,98	734.735,60

Holding ledger				
Identification	Opening balance from 2021 EUR	Expense 2022 EUR	Revenue 2022 EUR	Closing balance 2022 carried forward to 2023 EUR
Transitory Items	2.578,37	196.061,12	190.697,33	-2.785,42
Deposit	-3.739,99	0,00	0,00	-3.739,99
Transitory items - downpayments	138.063,95	0,00	0,00	138.063,95
AIRPRAL- Regional Empower Erment	25.000,00	25.000,00	0,00	0,00
Premayment inv	0,00	111.049,00	0,00	-111.049,00
Interests	0,00	42.262,41	42.262,41	0,00
Asset	1.462.397,15	1.120.039,22	371.888,13	714.246,06
Balancing Accounts	0,00	555.919,24	555.919,24	0,00
Total:	1.624.299,48	2.050.330,99	1.160.767,11	734.735,60

They were predominantly balanced within the year-end tasks. This especially refers to the passage accounts. The audit revealed no indications concerning any relevant cases of delayed accounting. As far as any audit-relevant circumstances arose, these were broached and/or spoken about during the audit statements.

The position "accounting balance carried forward from projects" displayed under "advance payment" amounting to 738,106.60 EUR and the position "asset" displayed under "transitory items" amounting to 714,246.06 EUR correspond to the reserve stock in ledger 92 (asset stock).

Presentation of the asset situation

The asset accounting of the WCRC (SB 92) as of 31st December 2022 according to the documents presented for the audit is as follows:

Reserve assets (including trust assets, according to SB 92)	Opening Balance 01.01.2022 EUR	Closing Balance 31.12.2022 EUR	Annual Percentage Change
WCRC Capital			
Reserve Fund	512.204,86	343.077,68	-169.127,18
IT Provision	32.063,59	15.421,45	-16.642,14
Fundraising Fund	31.012,44	31.012,44	0,00
Reserve for FX Fluctuations	100.000,00	20.000,00	-80.000,00
Designated Core Funds	46.086,19	12.073,96	-34.012,23
Oikotree	4.768,09	4.768,09	0,00
Reformed World	0,00	0,00	0,00
Pension Contributions Reserve	1.019.440,73	1.213.662,73	194.222,00
Specific Asset Items			
General Council 2024 Fund	369.848,10	416.090,99	46.242,89
CWM Endowment Reserve	1.211.500,00	1.211.500,00	0,00
Endowment Contributions CWM	714.985,77	714.985,77	0,00
ACRC Investment Holding		752,71	
Programmes (Structure as per Strategic Plan)			
P1 CULTIVATING A JUST COMMUNION			
Internship Programme	17.483,69	3.353,68	-14.130,01
Internship Programme - Personnel Reserve	62.740,98	62.740,98	0,00
Regional Empowerment - Aipral	0,00	25.000,00	25.000,00
Reformed Partnership Fund D	473,00	473,00	
Reformed Partnership Fund E	2.639,84	2.639,84	0,00
P2 COVENANTING FOR JUSTICE			
NIFEA - Campaigns	5.343,37	5.343,37	0,00
Ecology	130,34	130,34	0,00
Gender, Leadership and Power	40.459,33	31.225,04	-9.234,29
TESF	2.294,54	2.294,54	0,00
RAN	4.061,40	5.473,51	1.412,11
P3 DOING THEOLOGY FOR TRANSFORMATION			
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	77.102,28	77.102,28	0,00
Theological Networks	4.595,32	4.595,32	0,00
P4 ENGAGING GOD'S MISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISIS			
Mission	10.829,48	10.829,48	0,00

Reserve Assets			
Reserve assets (including trust assets, according to SB 92)	Opening Balance 01.01.2022 EUR	Closing Balance 31.12.2022 EUR	Annual Percentage Change
P5 WORKING WITH ALL THE PARTNERS GOD GIVES US			
Catholic Dialogue	249,04	249,04	0,00
Key Initiatives			
EMW	119.000,59	0,00	-119.000,59
OPM	105.734,20	0,00	-105.734,20
Ev. Church of Westphalia	24.575,56	13.169,17	-11.406,39
Custodian Funds			
Mission and Advocacy	145.695,26	133.971,76	-11.723,50
Justice & Partnership Office Support	50.902,07	50.902,07	0,00
Justice and Witness	13.017,80	11.510,11	-1.507,69
Mission Fund	18.016,30	18.016,30	0,00
Publications Fund	47.200,75	47.200,75	0,00
UCC Death Penalty Consultation	5.175,70	5.175,70	0,00
Equatorial Guinea	4.218,09	4.218,09	0,00
Native American Project	3.164,33	3.164,33	0,00
Sub-Total	4.807.013,03	4.502.124,52	-304.888,51
Trust Assets			
WCRC Europe	191.079,26	192.934,80	1.855,54
Total	4.998.092,29	4.695.059,32	-303.032,97

The total asset stock of the WCRC including the WCRC trust property amounted to 4,695,059.32 EUR for the year-end closing as of 31st December 2022. Compared with the previous year (4,998,092.29 EUR), this stock has increased by 303,032.97 EUR (6.06%) according to the accounting balance. However, this includes 158,651.04 EUR of earmarked funds consisting of the stocks of the EMW, Otto per Mille, the Ev. Kirche v. Westfalen, Mission and Advocacy and the Georges-Lombard Prize.

The changes in stock of the “key initiatives” are explained under classification number 2.2.

In the year 2022, no payment of the program means of the donor Otto per Mille occurred. The payment receipt is expected in the year 2023. The expenses of 192,288.66 EUR were transitionally retrieved from the “General Reserves”.

The ORA noticed that partly there has been no change for several years in the case of the above-mentioned earmarked funds. The ORA points out that a clarification as to how the earmarked funds arose in the past should be brought about. If the funds are earmarked donations, they should be utilized promptly according to their purpose.

The regulations of the fiscal code stipulate that donations/collections are generally to be used *promptly* – for their determined (tax-privileged) purpose. A *prompt* utilization is given if the funds are used for the tax-privileged purposes *within the calendar year following the inflow* at the latest. Even if the regulations of the fiscal code represent no direct legal effect for the WCRC, they do, however, contain an important fiscal basic principle of which many donors should trust that the WCRC comply with. Insofar, the aim should be to lead the donations to their purpose promptly.

The ORA was informed that occasionally changes were omitted due to the fact that they were international donations which had not been utilized in the past. If the earmarking is no longer given, these funds should be transferred to the General Reserves following a corresponding committee decision.

IV. AUDIT STATEMENTS

1. General statements

1.1 Applicability of the General Finance Management Policies

At the conference of the Executive Committee from 11th to 18th May 2014 in Hannover, the General Finance Management Policies of the WCRC were formally put into effect by resolution. The determinations of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies have partially not been implemented. The main reason for the fact that various regulations cannot yet be implemented is due to the applied accounting style. In this regard, the WCRC General Finance Management Policies stipulates the extended cameralistics and is designed accordingly. However, the WCRC still keeps its accounts in the accounting style of cameralistic.

In this regard, in its audit report of the year 2015, the ORA already stated and pointed out, among others, that elements of the year-end closing required by the General Finance Management Policies, e. g. a balance with attachment, cannot be existent due to the system as they cannot be generated in the cameralistic.

Thus, the ORA was again only able to orient this year's audit mainly according to the general principles of orderly accounting and, at this, especially focus on the continuity of the accounting.

To the ORA, this seems to be exceptionally justifiable as the office has announced that a conversion to the churchly double bookkeeping is targeted for the year 2025 at the latest.

1.2 Correctness of the Accounting / Documentation

The WCRC has a significant accounting. The documents were randomly audited, their presentation is orderly and clearly laid out. The traceability of the audited business transactions was given. Upon request, further differentiated analyses apart from the compulsory annual financial statements were presented within the frame of the audit.

1.3 Correctness and completeness of the year-end closing

The 2022 year-end closing of the WCRC was compiled dated 28th April 2023 (ZB closing no. 0101). It shows a volume of 2,722,405.31 EUR.

For the audit, the documentation from accounting (SB) was provided as the annual accounting document. Close inspection and checking of the contained proven year-end closing results gave no indication for differences of relevant significance.

1.4 Budget balance / Utilization of the 2022 surplus

The balancing of the ordinary budget was induced by an allocation of the annual surplus amounting to 210,392.65 EUR to the General Reserve Fund (SB 92, BSt. 5110.00 UK 1).

1.5 Balancing of the payment methods as well as of the investment accounts and deposits

For the audit, account and investment statements as well as account balance statements were presented for all the payment methods installed in the WCRC accounting as well as for all the asset components as proven in the balance sheet (SB 92). No objections were made concerning the balancing of the payment methods either.

The WCRC has been using an American account of the Fifth Third Bank for years. In the past, it was utilized for incoming payments of membership fees. Meanwhile, the incoming payments no longer occur via this account. Thus, this account should be closed. In the meantime, it has been blocked due to the use of a German IP-address. At the time of the audit, the account activities were visible online and have been considered within the frame of the annual closing 2022.

1.6 Exceeding and unscheduled expenses

According to § 28 of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies, exceeding and unscheduled expenses can only be induced if their covering has been decided upon. The exceedance of the budget is only admissible if a legal and unrefusable obligation for the performance of the expenditures and an unpredictable and irrefutable need exist. Moreover, exceeding and unscheduled expenses according to § 28 paragraph 2 of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies require the prior consent of the President and General Treasurer.

So as to rule out exceeding expenses in the future, there is the instrument of covering comments. These are to be noted in the budget and considered correspondingly in the future.

According to § 20 of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies, it is possible to regulate so-called budget comments for budget means. Covering comments "ED" (einseitige Deckung = unilateral covering) and "GD" (gegenseitige Deckung = mutual covering) would create the possibility of operating more flexibly. Hereafter, single expense approaches in the budget can respectively be declared as coverable if there is an administrative or factual connection. This enables a compensation of additional expenses by means of corresponding additional revenues or lower expenses in another place.

So far, corresponding covering comments have not been regulated in the budget. The ORA recommends reporting the mutual coverabilities within the frame of the budget.

In the statement on the audit of the annual financial statement 2021, it was notified that budget comments should be used in future. This should be agreed on with the Executive Committee and implemented promptly.

Within the frame of the management of the budget 2022, there were reduced expenditures amounting to 82,594.69 EUR compared with the agreed budget plan. In the 2022 budget, the unscheduled expenses amount to approx. 125,000.00 EUR and are balanced by the corresponding reduced expenditures. The exceeding expenses, among others, result from expenses for IT Infrastructure amounting to 16,642.14 EUR, expenses for Strategic Planning amounting to 29,073.61 EUR and staff expenses of 17,587.49 EUR.

According to the ORA, there was an unpredictable and irrefutable need for the exceeding expenses. However, these expenses were not authorized according to § 28 paragraph of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies.

The ORA recommends collecting the neglected authorizations belatedly and, for the future, taking care that such authorizations are regularly collected before inducing exceeding or unscheduled expenses.

1.7 Reserves of the General Council

Within the frame of the General Council carried out in the year 2017, the WCRC did not require a share of the contributions received for this purpose from other (member) churches and partner organizations.

Hence, non-utilized third-party funds of the UEK amounting to 138,063.95 EUR were deferred in the transit accounts in the budget years 2020/2021 and fully transferred to the budget year 2022.

According to the knowledge of the ORA, the UEK has agreed that the means remain with the WCRC and be available for the UEK share for the next General Assembly. As already mentioned in last year's audit report, the ORA argues that the UEK funds ought to be transferred to a corresponding earmarked reserve.

In the statement on the audit of the annual financial statement 2021, it was communicated that the funds would be transferred to an earmarked reserve as soon as the official agreement of the UEK is available.

1.8 Staff / Job chart

The submitted WCRC job chart is as follows:

No.	Function	Tariff	Compensation	Plan	Actual	Remark
1	General Secretary	NBesG	B 3	1.0	0.0	vacant from 01 September 2021
2	Exec. Secretary for Communication and Operations	NBesG	A 15	1.0	1.0	
3	Exec. Secretary for Justice and Witness	NBesG	A 15	1.0	1.0	
4	Exec. Secretary for Communion and Theology	NBesG	A 15	1.0	1.0	The employee is seconded by the Evangelical Church of Westphalia
5	Exec. Secretary for Mission & Advocacy	NBesG	A 15	1.0	1.0	Position filled starting on 01 December 2022
6	Administrator for Finance and Sustainability	DVO.EKD	EG 11	1.0	1.0	
7	Administrator for Projects and Programmes	DVO.EKD	EG 11	1.0	1.0	
8	Administrator for the General Secretariat	DVO.EKD	EG 11	1.0	1.0	Position filled until 31 Jan 2022, from 01 May 2022-30 Oct 2022. Vacant from 01 Feb 2022-30 Apr 2022 and from 01 Nov 2022
9	Cleaning Personnel	DVO.EKD	E 2	0.18	0.18	
10	Trainee (Intern)	TVPÖD	Festbetrag	1.0	1.0	
11	Trainee (Intern)	TVPÖD	Festbetrag	1.0	1.0	Position filled until 31 Jan 2022 and from 01 May 2022
12	Trainee (Intern)	TVPÖD	Festbetrag	1.0	1.0	Position filled form 01 Jul 2022
13	Assistant for Organisational Projects	DVO.EKD	EG 6	0.41	0.41	Temporary contract, position filled until 30 Apr 2022
total:				11.59	10.59	

As made evident by the comments, there were several job chart alterations in the year 2022.

The position of General Secretary has been vacant since 1st September 2021.

The ORA gained the impression that the staff capacities – despite the great commitment of the staff members – might be rather narrowly calculated. Against this background, the ORA recommends keeping an eye on the strain situation of the staff members.

The job chart contains three positions for trainees. In the meantime, the payment has been adapted to the TVPöD – due to the ORA statements of the previous year.

2. Statements on the annual financial statements

2.1 Development of the program budgets

The program budgets are processed within the ordinary WCRC budget (SB 00). Their financing mainly takes place by means of the provision of third-party contributions.

The various program budgets are each separately administered and settled in the single plans 2 to 7 of the budget.

For the year 2022, the program budgets are as follows:

Programme Budgets 2022	Opening Balance EUR	Revenues EUR	Expenses EUR	Closing Balance EUR
Main Structure 2				
THEOLOGY - GENERAL				
Georges-Lombard-Preis	13.017,80	0,00	1.507,69	11.510,11
Main Structure 6				
KEY INITIATIVES				
Otto per Mille	105.734,20	192.288,66	298.022,86	0,00
EMW	119.000,59	270.000,00	389.000,59	0,00
Ev. Church of Westphalia	24.575,56	20.300,00	31.706,39	13.169,17
Main Structure 7				
P1 CULTIVATING A JUST COMMUNION				
FULL AND JUST PARTICIPATION				
Youth	17.483,69	64.328,28	78.458,29	3.353,68
Indigenous People	0,00	26.070,48	26.070,48	0,00
Regional Empowerment	0,00	49.071,52	49.071,52	0,00
REFORMED PARTNERSHIP FUND				
Reformed Partnership Fund A	0,00	101.750,00	101.750,00	0,00
Reformed Partnership Fund B	0,00	20.027,00	20.027,00	0,00
Reformed Partnership Fund D	473,00	0,00	0,00	473,00
Reformed Partnership Fund E	0,00	32.500,00	32.500,00	0,00
P2 COVENANTING FOR JUSTICE				
New Economic and Financial Architecture (NIFEA)	0,00	10.618,80	10.618,80	0,00
REFORMATION SUNDAY	0,00	5.057,10	5.057,10	0,00
NIFEA - GEM School	0,00	28.113,48	28.113,48	0,00
Ecology	0,00	7.177,71	7.177,71	0,00
GENDER, LEADERSHIP AND POWER				
Gender, Leadership and Power	9.234,29	0,00	9.234,29	0,00
Ordination of Women	2.294,54	0,00	0,00	2.294,54
Racism, Authoritarianism and Nationalism (RAN) - EMPIRE	2.027,54	1.534,90	122,79	3.439,65
P3 DOING THEOLOGY FOR TRANSFORMATION				
COVID & Beyond	0,00	20.132,57	20.132,57	0,00
Strategic Planning	0,00	29.073,61	29.073,61	0,00
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
Theological Networks	0,00	21.053,87	21.053,87	0,00

The following statements concerning the program budgets resulted within the scope of the audit:

- For the administration of the program budgets, the WCRC strives for a transparent procedure which completely transfers the earmarked stocks of the program reserves from the WCRC balance sheet to the ordinary budget for administration every year, thus making the available means visible in the program budget for the responsible executive secretaries. At the end of a financial year, the remaining means, considering the running revenues and expenses of the projects, are transferred back to the corresponding reserves within the scope of the year-end procedures. The ORA checked the procedure in the accounting year 2022.
- Three of a total of 28 programs showed no financial activities in the year 2022.
- In the case of the program Gender, Leadership and Power, the amount carried forward from the year 2021 amounting to 41,353.38 EUR was only proportionately withdrawn from the reserves, amounting to 9,234.29 EUR.
- The finance committee of the WCRC decided that a global administrative cost allocation of 8 % is to be paid from the program budgets to the core budget so as to finance the administrative overhead expenses resulting in the Hannover office. If funders indicate other administrative costs rates, these are applied.
- The ORA was informed by the WCRC that the flat-rate administrative expenses contribution had not been determined currently. The ORA recommends determining a corresponding price calculation for the administrative expenses contribution promptly so as to be able to prove cost recoveries.

A revision of the program costs and an examination of the procedure showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization or assignment of means.

2.2 Utilization and application of contribution funds

Apart from the program budgets, the WCRC carries out other project work, which is financed by contributors. The complete overview of the individual contributors for the year 2022 is as follows:

Donor	Remaining funds	Revenues	Expenses	Carry-over
	2021	2022	2022	2023
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Council for World Mission	0,00	137.052,01	137.052,01	0,00
Otto per Mille	105.734,20	192.288,66	298.022,86	0,00
Evangelisches Missionswerk	119.000,59	270.000,00	389.000,59	0,00
Ev. Kirche von Westfalen	24.575,56	20.300,00	31.706,39	13.169,17
Total:	249.310,35	619.640,67	855.781,85	13.169,17

The non-required funds amounting to 13,169.17 EUR were carried forward into the budget year 2023 as earmarked or transferred to earmarked project reserves temporarily.

2.2.1 Council for World Mission

The contribution of the Council for World Mission was deployed for expenses for justice and witness as follows:

Council for World Mission	2022 EUR
Remaining means 2021	0,00
Revenues 2022	137.052,01
Expenses 2022	137.052,01
<i>davon Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness</i>	<i>84.796,95</i>
<i>davon Administrator Programmes and Projects</i>	<i>52.255,06</i>
Carry-over 2023	0,00

A review of the program costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

2.2.2 Otto per Mille

The contribution from Otto per Mille for the project work of the WCRC was deployed as follows:

Otto per Mille	2022 EUR
Remaining means 2021	105.734,20
Revenues 2022	-
Reserves Withdrawal	192.288,66
Expenses 2022	298.022,86
<i>davon NIFEA</i>	38.732,28
<i>davon Ecology</i>	7.177,71
<i>davon Indigenous People</i>	26.070,48
<i>davon Peace an Reconciliation</i>	30.386,41
<i>davon Partnership F und E</i>	134.250,00
<i>davon Grape</i>	61.405,98
Carry-over 2023	0,00

Concerning the funds of Otto per Mille it is to be noted that there has not yet been any receipt of payment of the funds in the budget year 2022. The receipt of payment is expected in the year 2023. The expenses amounting to 192,288.66 EUR have been transitionally financed from the General Reserves.

A review of the project costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

2.2.3 Evangelische Mission Weltweit

The contribution from the Evangelische Mission Weltweit for the missionary work of the WCRC was deployed as follows:

Evangelische Mission Weltweit	2022 EUR
Remaining means 2021 from reimbursement in the budget year 2022	119.000,59
Revenues 2022	270.000,00
Expenses 2022	389.000,59
<i>thereof lump sum administration</i>	405.000,00
<i>thereof Internship Programme</i>	63.328,28
<i>thereof Regional Empowerment</i>	49.071,52
<i>thereof COVID & Beyond</i>	20.132,57
GRAPE	26.132,21
GRAPE - Mission & Advocacy Executive Secretary Search	7.470,42
Strategic Planning	29.073,61
Theological Education Network	21.053,87
Freedom of Religion	5.098,73
WCC Assembly	92.523,14
Symposium	34.616,24
Carry-over 2023	- 0,00

A review of the project costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

2.2.4 Ev. Kirche von Westfalen

The contribution from the Ev. Kirche von Westfalen was deployed for the theology work of the partnership fund of the WCRC as follows:

Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen	2022 EUR
Remaining means 2021	24.575,56
Revenues 2022	20.300,00
Expenses 2022	31.706,39
<i>thereof lump sum administration</i>	1.624,00
<i>davon Partnership F und B</i>	20.027,00
<i>davon Reformation Sunday</i>	5.057,10
<i>davon Reformed-Mennonite Dialogue</i>	4.998,29
Carry-over 2023	13.169,17

Concerning the funds from the Ev. Kirche von Westfalen it is to be noted that only 44,875.56 EUR of the total of 31,706.39 EUR available funds were deployed. The difference amounting to 13,169.17 EUR was temporarily assigned to earmarked project reserves. This was agreed upon with the Ev. Kirche von Westfalen.

Other than that, a review of the project costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

2.2.5 Project Grape

On the part of the Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung (for Bread for the World), a Project Grape-Initiative (Global Reformed Platforms for Engagement) was agreed from 1st September 2022 until 31st December 2023.

The funds for the Project Grape of the WCRC were deployed as follows:

Projekt Grape	2022 EUR
Revenues 2022	156.732,11
<i>Bread for the World</i>	50.000,00
<i>OPM</i>	61.405,98
<i>EMW</i>	33.602,63
<i>PCUSA</i>	11.723,50
Expenses 2022	156.732,11
<i>davon Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy</i>	11.723,50
<i>davon Recruitment Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy</i>	7.470,42
<i>GRAPE Programme</i>	137.538,19
Carry-over 2023	-

A review of the project costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

2.3 Membership fees

The development of the WCRC membership fees within the audited period shows the following figures:

Regional Membership Fees	Budgeted EUR	Actuals EUR	Difference EUR
Africa	23.000,00	11.490,00	-11.510,00
Latin America	2.000,00	8.732,00	6.732,00
Caribbean and North America	210.000,00	242.036,28	32.036,28
Asia	60.000,00	67.221,65	7.221,65
Pacific	3.000,00	4.956,13	1.956,13
Europe	435.000,00	427.913,87	-7.086,13
total	733.000,00	762.349,93	29.349,93

In its last audits, the ORA reported that member church fee backlogs, whose total had not been documented, had accumulated in the last years. The WCRC office is still busy processing the development of the membership fees of the last years so as to obtain an overview of the existing payment obligations and fee backlogs of the member churches.

2.4 Expat expenses

The so-called “expat expenses” are benefits for the WCRC employees. The right to payment complies with the WCRC internal regulations of the “personnel policies and practices.” These are especially benefits concerning the costs of children’s school fees, rent and meals of children studying outside Hannover, language courses for spouses and children as well as travel to the employees’ home countries every two years.

The costs spent for this by the WCRC in 2022 can be summarized as follows:

Expat Expenses	Plan EUR	Ergebnis EUR	Saldo EUR
111. Executive Secretaries	29.000,00	24.333,00	4.667,00
total	29.000,00	24.333,00	4.667,00

The ORA carried out a revision of single cases and detected agreement with the regulations of the “personnel policies and practices.”

2.5 Risks resulting from currency fluctuations

Within the frame of its audit, the ORA determined that the WCRC was able to realize a gain from currency conversions amounting to 738.76 EUR (previous year: loss: 19,635.84 EUR) in the accounting year 2022.

Fx Gain/ Fx Loss	Budgeted EUR	Actuals EUR	Difference EUR
Fx gain	-	2.198,63	2.198,63
Fx loss	-	1.459,87	1.459,87
total	-	738,76	738,76

To safeguard against the risks resulting from currency fluctuations, an earmarked reserve is being maintained. After the closing of the CHF account (PostFinance) as well as the deposits in the USA (Barnabas Foundation, Presbyterian Foundation) and the reduction of the funds on the US account (Fifth Third Bank), the risks resulting from currency fluctuations have been reduced strongly. The earmarked reserve was reduced from 100,000.00 EUR to 20,000.00 EUR at the decision of the Executive Committee of 11th May 2022, at which 80,000 EUR were transferred to the General Reserve.

2.6 Awarding of contracts

According to § 32 of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies, the WCRC is to award contracts in a transparent procedure corresponding to the principles of economy and thrift following the specifications of the WCRC procurement policies. According to § 58 paragraph 1 of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies, the Executive Committee passed a purchase order. However, this order is not existent so far. Thus, a more in-depth examination still lacks the benchmark.

During its last audit, the ORA pointed out that in addition to § 32 of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies, the development of an own awarding and provisioning guideline with adapted thresholds is bindingly mandated and should be established promptly. In the statement concerning the audit of the year-end result 2021, it was stated that a provisioning regulation would be decreed within the conversion to the double-entry bookkeeping. Thus, the following has been added to the WCRC General Finance Management Policies:

“As long as the WCRC has not decreed any own provisioning regulations, public law applies, in this case the decree on the provisioning of public orders (VGV). In most cases, the Sub-Threshold Procurement (UVgO).“

3. Statements from previous audits

Within the frame of the audit of the year-end result 2021, the ORA carried out a revision of single cases concerning the payables processing of payrolls as well as other aspects of the HR department and their risks.

Within the frame of the current audit, the ORA requested the state of affairs of the statements from the previous audit mentioned below and, at this, especially considered the WCRC statement on the audit report 2021:

3.1 Description of work places and posts

The position ratings are to be defined by means of work place and post descriptions with the tasks, responsibilities and competencies connected with the positions. These descriptions are a mandatory basis of work place and post evaluations so that it is verifiable whether position ratings are according to pay scale or not. Furthermore, the staff's competencies are also to be regulated.

In the previous year, the ORA stated that not all alterations of position/ tasks and competencies as well as responsibilities of the staff were regulated and insofar there was need for action.

On this topic, the ORA was informed that the descriptions of work place and posts are currently still being revised.

3.2 Employment durations

While reviewing the staff cases, it was detected that the employment durations for the WCRC staff are not determined.

In the previous year, the ORA had recommended determining the employment durations of all staff cases and informing the staff about the calculation and determination in writing.

On this topic, the ORA was informed that the employment durations had not yet been determined. Therefore, the ORA recommends implementing this promptly now.

3.3 Extra hours

In the year 2021, there were many vacancies at the WCRC. The tasks had been assumed by the "Assistant / Administrator for Justice and Communion." Extra hours had arisen due to the substitution.

The ORA had recommended investigating whether balancing the hours by free time compensation was correspondingly possible or whether extra hours were to be ordered and remunerated.

On this topic, the ORA was informed that a clarification has not taken place. The ORA recommends implementing this promptly now.

3.4 Contract on the staff accounting

The remunerations accounting and the payment of compensations is carried out by the ZGAST of the ev.-ref. Church in Leer. According to the administration, no agency contract has been closed between the WCRC and the ZGAST so far.

The ORA recommends contractually a new regulation of the business relations with the ev.-ref. Church in Leer in short. Within this frame, the factors significant for this business relationship, especially the utilized services, should be described in amount and extent, and liability regulations in case of possible damages should be determined.

No agency contract has been closed between the ZGAST of the Ev.-ref. Church in Leer and the WCRC so far. The ORA recommends implementing this promptly now.

4. Further statements

Various questions and problems which arose during the course of the audit were discussed orally. Further dealing with these points within the frame of this report is superfluous since these questions have already been clarified and future attention is to be expected.

4.1 Payables Processing

The payables processing of the WCRC transfers takes place by means of manual compilation in the online banking system provided by the KD Bank. The payments are carried out only by the Administrator for Finances. No other employees have access to the online banking system. Thus, an improper money transfer is not possible.

To release the payments, the authorised persons require a TAN number for the current account. The TAN numbers are sent to the Administrator for Finances to an app (private mobile phone) by the KD Bank. The subsequent clearance of the payments is carried out by the accountant's signature and, as a substitute, the Administrator of the General Secretariat (currently the Administrator for Projects and Programmes as a substitute). The authorised persons for the WCRC current account are the President, the General Treasurer, the General secretary, the Administrator for Finances, the Administrator for Projects as a substitute for the Administrator of the General Secretariat.

The ORA points out that the cash register safety (four-eyes principle) is to be ensured for payments.

The ORA recommends carrying out payments in an automated transfer system in future. At this, KFM generates a payment file, which is subsequently imported into the software at the bank. To make sure that the correct data are imported, it is necessary to synchronise the payment amount of the signed payment list with the amount on the imported data (see § 42 Abs. 4 General Finance Management Policies). The master data management of the payment recipients (name, account relationship) takes place in KFM.

4.2 Credit Card

The WCRC are mainly on business trips abroad. All hotel bookings and travel expenses are processed via credit cards. Currently, the WCRC holds six credit cards available for the current account (card holders: the respective Executive Secretaries and Administrators), which are especially deployed for online purchases and travel expenses. In future, the General Secretary and the vacant position of Administrator of the General Secretariat will also receive credit cards. The PIN code as well as the credit card are available to the corresponding employees. They are not locked away together.

The ORA does not misjudge that a number of business transactions may require the existence and use of a credit card. However, the use of credit cards does bear risks.

Apart from an administrative effort, which should not be underestimated, it is mainly the aspects of cash register safety resp. the Internal Control System (IKS) which argue against the establishment of such a process. The single power of disposition contradicts applicable budget law, as the four-eyes principle is breached.

The use of a credit card cannot be limited in terms of content. Thus, it is basically also possible to use it (within the card limit) beyond the desired application. The cards are limited at 5,000 EUR, the limits being increased in the case of longer business trips.

If one knows the credit card data, the use is also possible without the actual card so that the question of the burden of proof arises in the case of unclear billing positions if the card owner declines/disputes a responsibility (possible abuse).

A clarification of unclear billing items can be connected with high research effort if the cause of a payment does not distinctly emanate from the booking entry on the credit card statement.

This risk is essentially accommodated by limiting the credit line to 5,000 EUR. On the side of the Administrator of Finances and the corresponding Executive Secretaries (four-eyes principle), a follow-up check is carried out upon the arrival of the credit card statement by reviewing the occurred payments concerning their legitimacy.

5. Accounting Restructuring

During last year's audit, the ORA was informed that the WCRC would like to restructure its accounting to the accounting style of double-entry accounting on 1st January 2024.

So far, the WCRC Executive Committee has not passed a corresponding resolution to restructure the accounting. Within the frame of this year's audit, the ORA was informed that the restructuring is to take place on 1st January 2025.

So far, no regulations / concept have been determined concerning the restructuring. Furthermore, it remains to be clarified which balance sheet classification and which chart of accounts are to be applied. A new budget code is not yet available as a draft. The corresponding regulations, including the budget code, have to be determined by the WCRC Executive Committee at the meeting in the year 2024.

It is the opinion of the ORA that this restructuring by 1st January 2025 will not be possible without external supervision. The ORA recommends enlisting the support of the Finance Coordinator of the Ev.-ref. Church and his project team of the Ev.-ref. Church for the restructuring. It is recommendable to start with the project "Introduction Doppik" as soon as possible.

V. AUDIT RESULT

Audit of the year-end result 2022

Subject of the audit was the annual financial statement submitted by the WCRC for the year 2022. According to the result of this audit, the ORA can confirm that:

- the accounting of the WCRC in the accounting year 2022 occurred in due form and in compliance with the relevant principles of orderly accounting,
- the WCRC annual financial statement mainly conveys an image of the situation of results and assets which corresponds to the actual circumstances,
- the year-end closing 2022 was correctly developed from the WCRC accounting.

Audit of the economic management and assets administration

With reference to the WCRC management of the budget and economy and the assets administration and as a result of the audit, the ORA can confirm that:

- the budget resolved by the WCRC Executive Committee was executed in due form, economically and thriftily and
- there are no indications for the fact that the regulations and principles effective for management might have been partially ignored to a considerable extent,
- An awarding and provisioning guideline is not available but compulsory according to § 58 paragraph 1 WCRC General Finance Management Policies. (See Tz. 2.6).

Remark

When appraising the results, it must be considered that the WCRC General Finance Management Policies are furthermore observed only to a very limited extent. The main reason is that the WCRC General Finance Management Policies are oriented towards the accounting style of extended cameralistics whereas the WCRC applies cameralistics.

The Finance Coordinator assured the ORA that all requirements for an entirely legally compliant action will have been created (see Tz. 1.1) at the latest with the change to the churchly double-entry bookkeeping announced for 2025.

Recommendation of discharge

According to the dutiful discretion of the ORA, considering the above-mentioned confirmations and remarks, there are no objections against the approval and authorization of the annual accounts by the Executive Committee according to articles X and XIV of the WCRC constitution.

Concerning the exoneration, the ORA argues that it can be issued provided the temporary application of the accounting style cameralistics – on the part of the boards – is furthermore considered tolerable. The ORA recommends connecting the exoneration with the condition that legally compliant acting in the sense of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies be ensured by the year 2025 at the latest. On the part of the Finance Coordinator of the Ev.-ref. Church, it was assured that this will be implemented for the year 2025.

Hannover, 12th May 2023



A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Gert Hattendorf".

(OKR MARK HATTENDORF)

OBERRECHNUNGSAMT DER
EVANGELISCHEN KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND



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