

## **REPORT OF THE ALIANZA DE IGLESIAS PRESBITERIANAS Y REFORMADAS DE AMÉRICA LATINA (AIPRAL)**

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Executive Secretary

This period was strongly shaped by three elements:

1. companionship to churches (through both electronic communication and personal visits)
2. building strategic relationships with other ecumenical bodies
3. preparing the assembly

### **Companionship to Churches**

- a. It is especially important the process of the Presbyterian Church in **Colombia** nowadays facing the dialogue of peace between the FARC and the government. We had an active participation in the consultation on peace and reconciliation organized by DiPaz Bogotá. Also we stay in constant relationship with the three pastors of this church who have received death threats.
- b. **El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala** are under critical social pressures because of the presence of different armed groups linked to narco-traffic, extortion and other criminal activities. The executive committee met in El Salvador last October. We had the chance to express our solidarity and also to get a better understanding of the social conflict and the role of the churches in it. It is planned a meeting on peace and reconciliation for March 2016, and we will participate in this event assuming also the representation of the WCRC.
- c. Although we did not visit Venezuela and Guatemala, we were close to the Presbyterian Church of **Venezuela** and the Evangelical National Church of **Guatemala** in their complex political processes. In both cases we sent pastoral letters after some dialogues with the authorities of the respective national churches.
- d. Also we are concerned with the situation of Haitian refugees in the **Dominican Republic**.
- e. The executive secretary met the authorities of the National Presbyterian Church of **Mexico**. On this occasion the dialogue was about the different positions of the Protestant churches around the issue of same-sex marriage. This church has a clear opposition to this, but it is understood that AIPRAL cannot and is not willing to impose a position on the national churches. Also in Mexico we had several meetings with the Mexican Communion of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches. They are looking forward to become member of our Alliance and Communion. We expect to present their request to our coming assembly.

### **Building Strategic Relationships in Latin America**

AIPRAL is an important part in the dialogue with other ecumenical partners such as CLAI, LWF, WSCF, ACT Alliance, CREAS and ALC Noticias, among others. We are working to coordinate our particular agendas and collaborate with each other. This is an uneasy but crucial task, especially facing the shortage of resources and the need to accomplish a more relevant incidence. We are still in this process of dialogue. So far we agree that in the following issues the most critical for our region: peace and reconciliation, economic and climatic justice, migration, agenda 2030, youth and gender, ecumenical theological training.

### **AIPRAL's Assembly**

Aipral will be celebrating its assembly from August 8 to 14 in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The motto of the event is **"Help us to sustain the harmony of your creation."** It is based on Genesis 8:22. It is our understanding that God's promise to Noah contains the basic elements to ensure the life in our planet, and that climate change is putting this at risk. Also we see that this harmony is cracked but is still there making life possible on the planet (see appendix 1 for the assembly logo).

AIPRAL's event is organized in 4 moments: pre-assembly of Youth and Women (August 8-9); climatic justice and water conference (August 9-12); AIPRAL's assembly (August 12-13); celebration of *AIPRAL's 60th anniversary* and encounter with Brazilian churches and society (August 14).

The goal of this event is to make aware and equip AIPRAL's member churches to have a stronger advocacy on the issue of climatic justice and water in their specific context. This topic it is not new in AIPRAL. We come to this assembly after a long and rich process of dialogue in the different regions of Latin American and the Caribbean. We started in the last assembly (Guatemala 2011) and continued with conferences in the different regions: Costa Rica 2012, Chile 2013 and Cuba 2014. Finally, as a result of this process we had two meetings in El Salvador to systematize, enrich and transform all the processes in a pedagogic guide oriented to local churches and social organizations. We believe that this educational guide will have a positive impact in the churches, helping them to assume a stronger understanding, advocacy and articulation on this issue.

### **WCRC**

- The relationship with the office and staff is in very good shape. In several occasions we coordinated a common vision and action with the general secretary, and we are doing our best to keep improving the coordination and cooperation.
- Unfortunately, the process of decision-making of the executive committee is not so clear for us. Concretely, the formal process of consultation to and dialogue with the region is at least imprecise, and also it is vague who represents the voice of the region in the executive committee.
- On the other hand it is important to mention the bi-regional event organized by the WCRC's office for justice and partnership (Cuba, January 2016). Besides the specificity of this event, it is remarkable the synergy and further possibilities

that this bi-regional experience brought to our region, especially to the Caribbean churches and needs to be explored further.

### **Communication**

Communication itself is in a constant process of change. It creates difficulties and also opens new possibilities. AIPRAL's executive committee decided to transform *La Voz* into a publication oriented to the formation of the church leadership and move all the information to the website and newsletter. We also decide to publish one of the issues on paper and digital and one only in digital format. As part of this change we hired a person, with the resources we saved from the paper publication, to update and do a bigger database so we may also strengthen the dialogue and relationship with the churches and people interested in the issues we are working on.

### **Departments**

- The department for **Women** prepared the material for the Latin American Women's day of pray. Last year the material was prepared by women from the Presbyterian Church of Colombia. This department with the **Youth** department were also involved in the event "Gender Reading of Accra Confession" held in Matanzas, Cuba, in January 2016.
- The departments of **Justice and Communion** and **Theology of Mission** coordinated the two meetings held in El Salvador to systematize the material produced in the last five years on the issue of climatic justice. In those events the material was enriched and transformed into pedagogic resource that will be presented to the churches at the coming assembly.

### **Financial remarks**

The necessary economic structure to finance AIPRAL's assembly is a real challenge to us, but at the same time it resulted in the opening of relationships and cooperation with new ecumenical partners. Besides the constant support of FAP, PCUSA (World Mission) and the WCRC we have good support from the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, Churches helping Churches and the Waldesian Church. Many of these new contacts were done in dialogue with and help of the WCRC.

However, we are still struggling to establish more long-term agreements that facilitate the task and allow a better planning and more accountable results.



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São Paulo, Brasil 8 - 14 de Agosto de 2016

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XII Asamblea General de AIPRAL





