

## REPORT ON THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing

### 1 The General Council Planning Committee

Since the executive committee meeting in Lebanon the general council planning committee met two times: 2-4 September 2015 in Hannover and 26-28 April 2016 in Leipzig. On these two meetings the committee engaged with the planning process and is now able to recommend a general planning framework for the general council.

Members of the general council planning committee are: Dora Arce-Valentin (staff), Dario Barolin, Doug Chial, Sabine Dressler, Martin Engels, Chris Ferguson (general secretary), Hanns Lessing (general council coordinator), Cheryl Meban, Jerry Pillay (president), Aiko Sumichan, Phil Tanis (staff), Lisa Vander Wal, Douwe Visser (staff).

### 2 The General Council

#### 2.1 Leipzig, Berlin, Wittenberg

The general council will be held in Leipzig, Germany, in 2017—the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The WCRC is returning to the birthplace of the 16th-century Reformation to demonstrate that this event belongs to Christians around the world—and to witness to the world in these times of injustice and violence.

##### *Leipzig*

The business of the council will be taken up in Leipzig. Leipzig is an appropriate site for such a gathering. It has welcomed visitors to its conference grounds for 1,000 years. The local Reformed congregation is a vibrant cultural centre in a city known for its dedication to the arts. And the candlelit peace prayer vigils of 1989 sparked the reunification of Germany.

##### *Wittenberg*

In Wittenberg, the birthplace of the Reformation, the general council will affirm its visible support to Christian unity at a worship service close to Martin Luther's church and in acts of agreement with the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic churches. Historic sites will be visited.

##### *Berlin*

Berlin will see the council engage in the Church's witness to the world. An internationally broadcast worship service will be held in the Berliner Dom. The council will immerse itself in the life of the city—visiting diaconal institutions, historic sites and local congregations. And it will engage globally at a reception hosted by Germany's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

#### 2.2 The general council agenda (see appendix 1)

##### *The general council theme "Living God, renew and transform us"*

Discussions at the general council will be guided by the council theme. The motto will be developed in three directions, which build upon the three major texts from the Bible that will guide the deliberations of the council.

<b>“Living God</b>	<b>renew and transform</b>	<b>us”</b>
→ Reformation	→ Justice	→ Communion
→ Jeremiah 10:1-10	→ Romans 12:1-2	→ Luke 4:16-21

While the council conducts its business it is continuously reminded of the interconnectedness of reformation, justice and communion.

#### *Worship and Bible study*

The work of the general council shall be based upon the study of God’s word. Each plenary day will begin with a worship service (cf. below #5), followed by a Bible study presentation (cf. below #4) that will be discussed in Bible study groups.

The worship committee recommends that each worship should stand under a theme that is based on the verbs in Paul’s appeal in Romans 12:1-2:

- “Living God, you formed us.” (Genesis 12 (forming of God’s people))
- “Living God, help us to discern your will.” (Hebrews 4:12ff)
- “Living God, renew us.” (2 Corinthians 5:11ff)
- “Living God, reform us.” (Matthew 15:21-28)
- “Living God, transform us.” (Luke 19:1-10)

The worship and Bible studies will take place in the plenary hall. After the Bible study presentation the delegates will gather in Bible study groups. These groups are composed according to language. The delegates sit around round tables as “buzz groups” of 8 people each.

This special focus of the worship services will make the council theme a palpable presence of each day.

#### *The “big five” public worship services*

The “big five” public worship services will be testimonies of the mission of WCRC to the German public and the world at large:

- The opening service on 29 June in St. Nikolas Church in Leipzig will engage with the Christian roots of the peaceful revolution of 1989.
- The worship in the Berlin Dom will be broadcasted by a major German television network. At the Berlin day on 2 July the council will address its message on justice to the political world (see appendix 4).
- At the peace prayer on 3 July in St. Nikolas Church the council will pray for peace in those areas of the world that are affected by war and destruction.
- In Wittenberg on 5 July the council will reaffirm central tenets of the Reformation and recommit itself to Christian unity (cf. below #7).
- The closing service on 7 July will give direction for the work of the WCRC in the years to come.

#### *The flow of the plenary*

The flow of the plenary shall be organised following the discernment model as it is practised by the Reformed Church in America and the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. This model is based by the understanding of the Church as a communion: “**Discernment** means a prayerful process by which a common mind of the general council 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 general council is a community of faith earnestly seeking to understand God’s will;
- each participant in the general council has been given unique gifts and insights by God;
- every participant’s contribution is worthy of respect;
- our aim is to discern what the Spirit is saying to the churches through the general council; and
- our commitment is to find faithful ways forward on which all can agree” (*Rules of Procedure of the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids*).

The planning committee recommends that the discernment process on the general council shall follow a “three-step methodology” (cf. below #8):

1. Listening (theme inputs, reports etc.)
2. Dialogue in groups of about 25 people
3. Decision in the plenary.

The churches practicing this model report that by following this methodology they could take the majority of their decisions by consensus.

### **2.3 On the way to the general council**

Material is being prepared that should enable the churches to promote the general council and to engage with its theme:

#### *Logo*

The general council logo was developed by a graphic designer firm in Düsseldorf. It visualises the council theme “*Living God, renew and transform us*” pointing to the life-giving dynamic of the Spirit that renews and transforms the earth.

#### *Promotional material*

The communications desk prepared a brochure in six languages (English, French, Spanish, German, Indonesian and Korean) that introduces the general council and shares basic information about the theme and the sites where the council will take place.

Posters, buttons and other giveaways are also available.

#### *Theme booklet*

A group of theologians prepared a theme booklet (see appendix 2) with Bible studies, theological reflections, and examples from the life of the churches. These texts are based on the three directions developed from the council theme: reformation, justice and communion.

The booklet will be available in English, French, Spanish, German, Indonesian and Korean and shall also contain educational material that will allow church groups and committees to engage with the texts.

#### *Publications still to come*

The following material will be published prior to the council:

- *From Grand Rapids to Leipzig*, summarising the history of WCRC in the period between the councils.
- The Bible study book with the Bible studies that shall be presented during the general council.
- The worship book.

### 3 Theme inputs

In the general council agenda there are four slots for theme inputs.

The theme inputs:

- should engage the delegates with the three trajectories reformation, justice and communion
- should be inspiring and thought-provoking
- may address only aspects of the respective theme
- should apply different methods (lectures, dialogue of two speakers, panel discussions, etc.)

The planning committee recommends the following speakers:

- Jürgen Moltmann
- Naomi Klein
- Philip Peacock
- Tinyiko Maluleke
- Navid Kermani

Suggestions from members of the executive committee should consider equity in terms of gender and region, theological as well as rhetorical poignancy, and the thrusts of the three theme trajectories.

#### 1. Reformation

**Reformation** is the central mark of the “Reformed Church always reforming.” The discussions on the council should show that “Reformation” is not just a static identity claim but the characteristic of a church that is continuously renewed and transformed by the Word of God.

The theme input on reformation should stress this special character of the Reformed tradition.

Recommended speaker: **Jürgen Moltmann** who recently has written the book *The Living God and the Fullness of Life*.

#### 2. Justice

Since Accra **justice** stands in the centre of the work of the WCRC:

- Theologically the WCRC emphasises the connection between justification and justice
- in its witness the WCRC want to proclaim justice as the ultimate objective of God’s presence in this world.

The input should

- engage with pressing issues of economic justice

- demonstrate the relevance of the voice of Reformed theology in the justice debates of our time.

Recommended speakers: social activist **Naomi Klein**, e.g. with her book *This Changes Everything*, in dialogue with the Indian theologian **Philip Peacock**.

### 3. Communion

The call to **communion** addresses several levels of the “**us**” to which the theme of the council refers:

- “us” as a gathering of individual believers
- “us” as the communion of the Church
- “us” as inhabitants of the planet

The planning committee recommends that the theme inputs should address the aspects “communion of the church” and the “communion of the inhabitants of the planet.”

- The “**communion of the church**”-input could lay the theological foundation for the understanding of community in controversial discussions like human sexuality. Recommended speaker: The South African theologian **Tinyiko Maluleke** could be one of the contributors.
- The “**communion of the inhabitants of the planet**”-input could focus on the collaboration of religions in the care for the survival of the planet. Recommended speaker: The Iranian-German philosopher and scholar of religion **Navid Kermani** could be one of the contributors.

## 4 Bible studies

The planning committee suggests that three Bible study leaders should be called to engage with the three theme trajectories. Two of the leaders are invited to suggest supplementary texts to expand their exegesis.

The committee recommends the following Bible study leaders:

- Walter Brueggemann
- Elsa Tamez
- Mitri Raheb

Additional suggestions from members of the executive committee should consider equity in terms of gender and region, theological as well as rhetorical poignancy, and the thrusts of the three theme trajectories.

No.	Theme trajectory	Text	Recommended leader
1	Reformation	Jeremiah 10:1-10	Walter Brueggemann
2	Justice	Romans 12:1-2	Elsa Tamez
3	Communion	Luke 4:16-21	Mitri Raheb
4	Justice		Elsa Tamez
5	Communion		Mitri Raheb

The worship committee:

- recommends that the Bible study leaders collaborate with the worship committee in order to link worship and Bible studies closely together
- suggests the following supplementary texts for the Bible studies:
  - Psalm 85 (justice)
  - Matthew 15:21-28 (communion)

## **5 Worship**

The worship committee met from March 31 to April 5, 2016 in Leipzig. The members of the committee are Alison Adam (Scotland), André Bartlett (South Africa), Sabine Dressler (Germany – chair), Chineta Goodjoin (USA), Dwight Kelly (Jamaica), Gerardo Oberman (Argentina), Ester Pudjo Widiasih (Indonesia), Kathy Smith (USA) and Maria Cornou (USA). They were accompanied by vicar Nina Ciesielski (Germany) and the musicians Helga Hoogland (brass band leader) and Christiane Bräutigam (choir leader and organist).

On this meeting the committee laid the groundwork for all worship services during the general council (see appendix 3). The group will reconvene during the worship symposium at Calvin College in Grand Rapids in January 2017.

The worship committee requests consideration of the following recommendations:

- The group should be mandated to commission theme songs from composers/writers of lyrics in different contexts.
- Worship should take place in an extra place (Hall 1, 5 minutes' walk from the plenary hall). The Planning Committee was concerned that the movement would cost too much time and advises against it.
- During the council chaplains should be present to accompany delegates and visitors pastorally if they want to engage more personally with the theme.
- The ceremonial opening of the general council by the president should take place during the opening service.
- Two communion services should be held: in the closing service and also in the service in Wittenberg in order to testify to the communion with the Lutheran Church.

## **6 Berlin day (2 July 2017) (see appendix 4)**

The Berlin day will show the WCRC's witness to the world. The following events will take place:

- Worship service in Berlin Dom
- Reception by the German Federal Government in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Visits of historical sites, diaconic institutions and congregations in Berlin

### **6.1 Worship service in Berlin Dom**

The Berlin Dom is the main church of the United Church in Germany (UEK). The building originates from the imperial era and testifies the desire of Prussian kings and German emperors to unite Lutheran and Reformed congregations in one church.

Framework:

- *Preparation:* The service will be prepared by the worship committee in close connection with the leadership of WCRC and in collaboration with representatives of the UEK.
- *Character:* The service shall be distinctly Reformed in character and should show the richness of Reformed worship to German and international TV audience.
- *Scripture:* The text for the sermon should be Luke 4:16-21 that will allow to express the WCRC's mission of justice.
- *Preacher:* The preacher is not yet determined
- *TV Broadcast:* The service shall be broadcasted by ZDF, one major German TV channel, in a programme that is usually watched by more than a million people. Transmissions to other countries are possible.

## **6.2 Words of greeting in Berlin Dom**

Due to the TV transmission the worship is limited to 45 minutes. The engagement with the UEK, the Dom congregation and the church and the city of Berlin can only take place after the service. The following people have been approached:

- Bishop P. Bosse Huber (UEK)
- Bishop M. Dröge, Berlin
- Dr. I. Schwätzer (Berlin Dom)
- Hon. M. Müller (Mayor of Berlin)

## **6.3 Reception by Federal Government**

After the worship service the general council will be received by the Federal Government in the Foreign Affairs Ministry. This reception is an important occasion to express WCRC's witness on social justice to the political world.

Foreign Minister Franz-Walter Steinmeier will receive the delegates on behalf of the government to this occasion also the ambassadors of the countries of the WCRC member churches and dignitaries from church, politics and society shall be invited.

### **Programme**

- Welcome by Foreign Minister Dr Steinmeier
- WCRC member churches addressing injustice world wide—"stories" by GC delegates
- Handing over of WCRC statement on justice (public witness document, drafted with input from core groups, decided upon by the officers)
- Invitation to light meal by Minister Dr. Steinmeier
- Light meal

## **6.4 Visits of historical sites, diaconic institutions and congregations in Berlin**

After the reception, delegates and visitors will embark upon a visitors' programme in Berlin. Groups of 25 people will visit the following sites:

- Solidary visits with diaconic institutions
- Visits to historical sites in Berlin
- Visits of congregations in Berlin

The groups will be composed according to interests indicated with registration.

## 7 Wittenberg day (see appendix 5)

Wittenberg is the place where Martin Luther worked throughout most of his life. Today the town is regarded as one of the primary sites of identity in many Protestant churches. The general council will revisit this history and consider its significance for Christian witness today.

Depending on the decision of the executive committee and the results of the discussions with the Lutheran World Federation and the Vatican, the general council at this day will sign and celebrate the following ecumenical agreements:

- The **Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification**. The WCRC will associate to the declaration signed by the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic churches in 1998.
  - The signing statement will express that the consensus reached by LWF and Vatican on the doctrine of justification is also shared by the World Communion of Reformed Churches.
  - At the same time it will introduce the theological link between justification and justice as an important item for the agenda of ecumenical dialogue.
  - To this event also the other associates of the declaration (Methodists, Anglicans, Mennonites) could be invited.
- The **Wittenberg Declaration** between LWF and WCRC will, as is hoped for on the WCRC side, be based upon the results of the dialogue that are published on the title *Communion: On being the church* in 2012. This document:
  - points out that remaining theological differences between Lutheran and Reformed doctrine are not church dividing
  - and calls the two churches to “follow the Lund Principle, that is, jointly to carry out whatever we can do together and only work separately there where there is a compelling reason to do so.”

The combination of the two ceremonies could offer the chance to create a powerful symbolism of the unity of the Christian Church.

### 7.1 *Worship service*

Framework:

- *Site*: Martin Luther’s church, the Schlosskirche, is too small to accommodate all participants. There are three alternative options:
  - Open air stage on Schlossplatz, in front of Schlosskirche (space for up to 5,000 people);
  - Stadtkirche (seats 1,000 people)
  - Tent (seats 1,200 people)
- *Preparation*: The service will be prepared by the worship committee in close connection with the leadership of WCRC and—depending on the decisions on the ecumenical documents—in collaboration with representatives of the EKD, the LWF and the Vatican.



- *Host*: Bishop Bedford-Strohm, chair of the EKD council, has been invited to be the host of the proceedings in Wittenberg. The precise meaning of this function still has to be clarified.
- *Scripture*: The text for the sermon should be Matthew 25:21-36. This will allow for the expression of the Reformed understanding of justification and justice.
- *Preacher*: The preacher is not yet determined

## **7.2 “Reformation: Global, Diverse, and Ongoing.” Voices from the World Communion of Reformed Churches in dialogue with Martin Luther**

For many WCRC member churches Wittenberg is not a primary site to commemorate Reformation history. It is a main characteristic of the Reformed church that from the very beginning the tradition was very diverse in theological emphasis and geographical width. The member churches that trace back to the Waldensian and the Hussite movements testify that the Reformation did not begin with Martin Luther but significant insights had been developed considerably earlier.

This diversity shall come to life in contributions from the different traditions.

## **7.3 The “world exhibition,” Wittenberg**

The German churches with support from churches from Europe have developed a huge programme that shall express the continuing relevance of the Reformation tradition in Germany and beyond. The presentations are grouped around seven gates of freedom that shall symbolise the openness of the Protestant tradition:

- “welcome gate”
- “spirituality gate”
- “youth gate
- “gate to justice, freedom and integrity of creation”
- “globalisation gate”
- “ecumenism and religion gate”
- “culture gate”

During the day the participants have the opportunity to visit the different presentations or to see the Luther sites in Wittenberg.

## **7.4 Signing acts**

Depending on the decisions of the executive committee and the result of the negotiations with the LWF and Vatican the day will conclude with the signing of ecumenical agreements and the planting of a tree in the Luther garden.

Site:

- cf. above or the LWF presence at Luther Garden

Programme:

- Association to Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification (WCRC with LWF and Vatican and all the other associates (Anglican, Methodist, Mennonites))
- Presentation of Wittenberg Declaration (WCRC and LWF)
- Tree Planting at Luther Garden
  - Theme: Reformed-Lutheran unity
  - Presentation of Wittenberg Declaration
  - Tree planting

## **8 Discernment and decision-making**

The general council draws together people from different countries, cultures and traditions. It takes time to build the trust and relationships that form a community of faith. That is why a large part of our life together during the general council is dedicated to worship, Bible study and community building.

The planning committee recommends that this communion approach shall be expressed in the process of decision-making of the council:

- The council shall apply a methodology of discernment that is based upon the unique gifts and insights by God that every participant in the general council has been given.
- The discussion of all major questions shall take in dialogue groups that discern the issues on the basis of the information presented in the listening sessions, theme inputs and Bible studies and prepare them for decision-making.
- The work of the dialogue groups shall be focused on the future orientation of the work of the WCRC and its member churches.
- This methodology shall replace the expert committees and specialised sections that traditionally prepared the decisions in the general council.

As already mentioned above the discernment-process on the council shall be conducted in three steps:

### **8.1 Listening**

The general council 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.

Prior to the dialogue group meetings in the listening process the delegates shall receive information and insights from the following sources:

- Reports
- Bible study presentations
- theme inputs
- proposals coming from member churches and the core groups through the business committee

Creative presentations (beyond the spoken word) may help stimulate creative solutions for complex matters. Time for questions of clarification is an important part of presenting information.

At the end of the listening sessions draft proposals to be discussed by the dialogue groups shall be introduced.

## **8.2 Dialogue**

The discernment process during the general council is value driven and should respect each individual and her/his voice even as the process unites the delegates through discussion and consensus. No delegate should be marginalised based on any factor especially, in this process, language: “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 IV, Section B).

### *Composition of Dialogue Groups*

Thus, while dialogue groups will formally be appointed by the president and approved by the general council, their specific composition will be driven by language. Since participation from all is a foundation for a successful discernment process, delegates need to feel comfortable communicating within the dialogue groups.

Dialogue groups are composed of three to four Bible study groups, creating a total of about 30 groups. Dialogue groups shall be constructed using *language fluency* (rather than primary language) as a criteria. They will be limited to one or two languages to reduce demands on translators (and hence the budget). If this is not possible, then a limited number of multi-lingual dialogue groups would be created.

In the composition of dialogue groups the following factors should be recognized (and sometimes weighed against each other):

1. **Diversity:** Groups should not be geographically driven. The discernment process is designed to unite the council and its decision-making process from the grassroots. It is thus important not to have a group composed solely from a single country or region.
2. **Communication:** All members of a group must be able to communicate effectively with one another. This does not necessarily mean that groups are composed based on primary language, however. Options include grouping those fluent in the same language or providing translators.
3. **Justice:** Besides geographic diversity, each group should be balanced between gender, age and ordained/non-ordained.

### *Leadership*

A critical aspect of each group's composition is the *leadership*. Each group needs at least two pre-selected (and trained) leaders:

- a *chairperson* appointed by the general council to be the moderator of a dialogue group. The main task of the chairperson is to ensure that all delegates can fully participate on the discussion.
- and a *Scribe* appointed by the general council to be the secretary of a dialogue group and to convey its findings to the drafting team. At the end of each session the dialogue group determines which points should be brought to the drafting team.

The chairs and scribes of the dialogue groups will have to arrive in Leipzig prior to the council for *training*. This training will, in essence, run them through the discernment process, including the creation of group reports on each theme (which will be submitted along with the others). This gives the chairs and scribes voice in the process without compromising their roles during the council itself. Professional trainers would serve as the chair and scribe for this, with the scribe also acting as a consultant to the drafting team.

#### *Consensus on norms and values*

The introductory session of the dialogue 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.

#### *Drafting of proposals*

After the dialogue groups have finished their work on a theme, the scribes will gather to distill 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.

### **8.3 Decision**

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. If the process has worked as it is intended, delegates will hear their voices 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. With discernment procedures in place, there is an expectation that close to unanimity will be reached before discussion moves to the decision.

### **8.4 Issues for further deliberation**

The planning committee recommends the introduction of a discernment model according to the described methodology. The following issues require expert advice:

#### *Introduction of business to the council*

Here a method should be applied that allows delegates to bring business to the council without clogging the system by too many issues.

While the dialogue groups should discern matters on the basis of their gifts, experience and insights, the material given to the dialogue groups should be structured and focused in order to allow a discussion that will lead to proposals that can be decided upon in the plenary.

#### *Consensus model*

The values that guide the discernment model would be contradicted if at the end matters would be decided by majority vote. The consensus model applied in the discussions of the councils in Accra and Grand Rapids should therefore be further developed.

### *Decision about Committees*

The rules of procedure of the Uniting General Council suggested the calling of the following committees:

- Business Committee (constitutionally prescribed)
- Nominations Committee (constitutionally prescribed)
- Public Issues Committee
- Message Committee
- Constitution & Membership Committee
- Policy Committee
- Finance Committee

The planning committee recommends to revisit the list of committees and to reduce its number. Particularly the *policy committee* seems to be redundant since its work shall be conducted in the dialogue groups.

The planning committee recommends that expert advice shall be called for the formulation of the rules of procedure for the Leipzig council.

## **9 Women and youth pre-councils**

The women and youth pre-councils shall take place prior to the general council on 27-28 June 2017 in the Reformed Church in Leipzig.

The pre-councils have the following objectives:

- Preparing women and youth delegates for the full participation in the General Council
- preparing for leadership
- giving voice to the issues that affect women and youth
- introducing the issues that are discussed in the women and youth networks of the WCRC to the general council.

The planning committee recommends that the pre-councils should be fully integrated in the work of the general council. The messages of the pre-councils shall be introduced into the discernment process.

## **10 Global Institute of Theology**

The Global Institute of Theology (GIT) will take place 19-28 June 2017 in Wuppertal. The GIT is an academic programme. Forty participants, among them 10 from Germany, will discuss the theme "Confession and Confessing Church" with special focus on the Barmen Declaration that was adopted in a church very close to the Kirchliche Hochschule where the GIT will take place.

Staff of the GIT: president: Bas Plaisier; dean: Musa Dube; dean of students: Aruna Gnanadason; worship leader: Andrew Donaldson.

On June 28 the GIT will move from Wuppertal to Leipzig in order to participate in the general council.

The planning committee recommends that students and faculty of the GIT should be fully integrated in the work of the council. The message of the GIT shall be introduced into the discernment process.

### **11 Global youth gathering: “Meet the World” (23-28 June 2017) (see appendices 6 and 7)**

The planning committee recommends that prior to the general council a global youth gathering shall take place, where young people can meet each other, experience Christian fellowship and can engage with the council and its theme.

#### *Target groups*

Youth groups from WCRC member churches, interested stewards and interested youth delegates to the council.

#### *Place*

The youth gathering will take place at the *Begegnungszentrum Zwochau* outside Leipzig of the Roman Catholic Fokolare Movement.

#### *Leadership*

The youth gathering will be prepared and facilitated by a working group consisting of members of the WCRC staff and volunteers.

#### *Time structure*

The youth gathering will take place 23-28 June 2017:

- 23-25 June: Youth groups, stewards and youth delegates will live, work and celebrate together;
- 26 June: The steward training will commence and the stewards will begin with their duties;
- 27-28 June: The youth delegates shall participate in the youth pre-council.

After the youth gathering international youth groups may team up with European counterparts in order to:

- stay in Leipzig and join the visitors’ programme of the general council
- plan a joint programme in Germany
- or plan a visit in the home country of the European group

#### *Finances*

The youth gathering does not have the funds to reimburse international traveling. We call upon churches with financial resources to link up with their partners in the Global South and support their participation in the youth gathering.

### **12 Steward programme (see appendix 8)**

The general council steward programme traditionally has the following objectives:

- Support of the general council logistics
- introduction to the ecumenical world
- leadership development

For the general council in Leipzig the planning committee recommends:

- the invitation of 70 stewards (35 from Germany, 35 international)
- the appointment of two chief stewards (1 from Germany, 1 international), who will help in the setting up of the programme and will act as spokes persons of the stewards in discussions with the general council staff
- the appointment of a co-opted staff person to coordinate the steward programme

The Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany has offered Werner Keil to coordinate the steward programme. Rev. Keil is a minister in a parish in Bermerhaven and is very interested in youth and development work. The planning committee is thankful that Rev. Keil is offering his services.

### **13 Visitors' programme**

The planning committee recommends that the visitors' programme will allow people who want to engage with the general council and its theme:

- to take part at the public sessions, particularly the Bible studies and the theme inputs;
- to join the trips to Berlin and to Wittenberg;
- to participate in a seminar programme that will allow further discussion with the main speakers of the assembly (together with students and staff of the GIT);
- to take part in the cultural events that will take place in the programme of the council;
- to have the opportunity for some sightseeing (sites of the Reformation, places famous in the tradition of church music (Bach, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy)).

#### *Objectives*

The visitors' programme aims at the following objectives:

- allowing interested people to engage with the general council and the WCRC
- invitation of young people to become part of the ecumenical movement
- strengthening the relationship between the WCRC and its member churches

#### *Leadership*

The visitors' programme will be co-ordinated by Sylvia Bukowski and Paul Oppenheim with support of people in the member churches, particularly in the USA. We thank all people who share in the leadership of this programme!

#### *Finances*

Visitors will have to carry the costs for travel and accommodation and will have to pay a fee that will cover the administrative costs of the programme. We call upon churches with financial resources to link up with their partners in the Global South and support their participation in the visitors' programme.

### **14 Cultural projects**

The planning committee recommends the following cultural projects:

#### **14.1 Psalm concert (4 July 4 2017) (see appendix 9)**

Leipzig is a city of church music. Johann Sebastian Bach worked here; Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy was even a member of the Reformed congregation!

The planning committee therefore recommends that a concert should be held that engages with this tradition from the perspective of the global communion of the WCRC.

The concert shall:

- relate to the tradition of Reformed worship and gather settings of Psalms
- engage with the Psalms as expressions of pain and hope in difficult situations
- gather music from composers from different continents
- allow the participants to participate by praying and singing
- be disseminated to the WCRC member churches, delegates receive the music that will allow them to bring the concert to their home countries

#### *Leadership*

The concert is planned by a working group, which consists of the choir leader of the Reformed Church in Leipzig (Christiane Bräutigam) and professors of the College of Music in Dresden (Elisabeth Holmer and Wolfgang Lessing).

A reference group accompanies the planning process. Its members are: Park Seon-Won (South Korea), Ester Pudjo Widiasih (Indonesia), Jan Luth (Netherlands), Glendon Macaulay (Scotland) and Gerald Hobbs (Scotland).

#### *Character*

The concert attempts to give testimony to the expressiveness of the biblical Psalms in the present age. In all parts of the world people inside and outside of organized religious communities have resorted for centuries on the Psalter to express their pain, and to develop a language of hope that allows them to find hope and hold in situations experienced as hopeless. The biblical Psalms are the central reference for the spiritual life of Reformed churches for this reason.

The program juxtaposes commissioned compositions by the composers Geonyong Lee (Korea) and Cord Meijering (Netherlands) and classical works from the 17th, 19th and 20th centuries that engage with the Psalms in the horizon of social conflicts. Compositions from Europe, America and Asia testify in their diversity to the power of the Psalms as a spiritual world language.

#### *Global reception*

Following the concert the commissioned compositions shall be disseminated to the delegates in many countries. Delegates to the general council take note material and the performing rights home and thus get the opportunity to perform the composition in their home countries.

#### *Finances*

The German Ministry of Culture and the City of Leipzig will sponsor the concert.

### **14.2 Social art project: "Reformation-Transformation"**

The planning committee recommends that a social art project shall be organised in the context of the general council.

#### *Objectives*

The social art project shall:

- bring the spirit of transformation and renewal to the city of Leipzig



- explore the significance of spirituality in contemporary art
- express the views of groups and communities in Leipzig on social issues. The communities can be neighbourhoods, day care centres, elderly homes, refugee facilities or others. People from the WCRC youth gathering can also participate in the project.

### *Leadership*

The exhibition shall be curated by Peter Winkels and Jörg Reckhenrich (Berlin) who have coordinated similar projects (e.g. with the United Nations). A reference group still has to be formed.

### *Artists*

Five artists from around the world will work and live in Leipzig. They will form partnerships with local artists, working together in an art laboratory. Their task is to develop a series of artworks, performances or interventions which address the ways and needs for social transformation of a specific community in Leipzig.

The international artists should be internationally recognised. Preference should be given to artists who are linked to Christian churches, particularly to member churches of the WCRC.

### *The project*

The artists will engage with these questions: Does a secular city need spirituality? Does a community need spirituality? Do we need spirituality for the much needed transformation of our global community? How can art help to develop and communicate social transformation? How do contemporary artists approach spirituality in a materialistic world?

### *Opening of the social art exhibition (1 July 2017)*

The participants of the general council will visit the different art projects in the evening of 1 July.

### *Finances*

The German Ministry of Culture and the City of Leipzig will sponsor the art project.

## **15 Admission of delegations and reimbursements**

The WCRC constitution stipulates in Article IX:

Where a church sends two or more delegates, no more than half shall be ordained ministers, and the delegation shall be gender-balanced. Where a church sends two delegates, at least one shall be a woman. Where a church sends four or more delegates, at least one half of the delegates shall be women and at least one delegate shall be thirty years of age or younger on the date the General Council is convened.

This clause affects the policies on the admission of delegates and reimbursements of travelling costs.

### **15.1 Admission of delegations**

The planning committee emphasises that the constitutional regulation should apply. In special circumstances, a member church may apply to the general secretary and try to negotiate exemptions. The planning committee is aware that individual agreements might be necessary in exceptional cases, but stresses that such exceptions should be made in the spirit of the constitution.

### **15.2 Reimbursements** (see appendix 10)

The planning committee recommends that the attached reimbursement policy should be applied.

Reimbursements shall be provided to ensure fair participation of delegations of WCRC member churches that are composed according to constitutional requirements.

In view of the limited resources available, member churches should first ensure that all other avenues of support have been explored.

There is eligibility for a reimbursement:

- where it is understood that there would be difficulty in financing the full participation of the delegation
- the membership contribution from 2010 to 2015 has been paid
- and a request for a reimbursement has been made to the general secretary by 31 December 2016. In exceptional circumstances this period may be extended.

Reimbursements will be allocated using the following criteria, ensuring equal percentage of reimbursement for delegates of member churches:

- Churches whose delegations conform to the constitutional criteria regarding women, youth and lay persons
- Churches which have paid membership contributions from 2010 to 2015
- Churches, which have paid travel, accommodation and registration fees for at least one delegate

## **16 Finances**

Thanks to generous pledges by the WCRC member churches, the united churches in Germany and the German government the expected expenditure of 6,568,640.00 euro appears to be almost covered. We want to express our appreciation for all the donors.

Date	Tuesday, 27 June	Wednesday, 28 June		Thursday, 29 June - day 1	Friday, 30 June - day 2	
Venue	Ref Church, Nikolai	Ref Church, Nikolai	Messe	Nikolaikirche, Congress Hall, Messe	Messe	
Theme	youth gathering, registration	Pre-Councils, workshops, meetings, registration			"Living God, you formed us"	
07:30-08:00					Business committee	
08:00-08:30						
08:30-09:00						
09:00-09:30		Pre-Councils, youth gathering, workshops (communion group moderators etc.)			Worship / Bible Study 1	
09:30-10:00						
10:00-10:30					Tea / Coffee	
10:30-11:00				Openingworship, Opening of the Council (Nikolai)	Listening 1 (report GS)	
11:00-11:30						
11:30-12:00						
12:00-12:30			Closing worship Pre-Councils		Reception (Town Hall)	
12:30-13:00					Lunch (Town Hall)	
13:00-13:30						Lunch
13:30-14:00				Orientation 1		
14:00-14:30	Executive Committee				Theme input 1 (Messe)	Dialogue (norms and values)
14:30-15:00						
15:00-15:30						
15:30-16:00					Tea/Coffee	Tea/Coffee
16:00-16:30					Plenary 1 (opening actions)	Dialogue 1
16:30-17:00						
17:00-17:30				Listening 1 (report President)		
17:30-18:00						
18:00-18:30						
18:30-19:30	Pre-Councils, workshops (communion group moderators etc.)	Evening of encounters (organised by host churches)	Orientation 2	Dinner (Messe)	Dinner	
19:30-20:00						
20:00-21:30					Regional meetings 1 / Orientation 3	Regional meetings 2
22:00-23:00		Prayer		Evening Prayer (Reformed Church)	Worship (Reformed Church)	

Date	Saturday, 1 July - day 3	Sunday, 2 July - day 4	Monday, 3 July - day 5	Tuesday, 4 July - day 6
Venue	Messe	Berlin	Messe	Messe
Theme	"Living God, help us to discern your will"	Witness to the World	"Living God, renew us"	"Living God, reform us"
07:30-08:00	Business committee		Business committee	Business committee
08:00-08:30				
08:30-09:00	Worship / Bible Study 2	9.30-10.15 Worship in Berlin Dome (broadcasted by ZDF)	Worship / Bible Study 3	Worship / Bible Study 4
09:00-09:30				
09:30-10:00				
10:00-10:30	Tea / Coffee		Tea / Coffee	Tea / Coffee
10:30-11:00	Decision 1	Words of greeting (Dome)	Listening 2	Plenary 2 (nominations)
11:00-11:30	Theme input 2			Decision 2
11:30-12:00		Theme input 3	Theme input 4	
12:00-12:30				
12:30-13:00		Reception at Ministry of Foreign Affairs		
13:00-13:30	Lunch		Lunch	Lunch
13:30-14:00				
14:00-14:30		Light Lunch	Dialogue 2	Listening 3
14:30-15:00		Visit of historical sites / solidarity visits of diaconical projects		
15:00-15:30				
15:30-16:00			Tea/Coffee	Tea/Coffee
16:00-16:30	Tea/Coffee		Dialogue 3	
16:30-17:00	Committees			
17:00-17:30		Peace Prayer (Nikolai)		
17:30-18:00	Dinner		Dinner	
18:00-18:30			Light Dinner (Moritz Bastei???)	
18:30-19:30				
19:30-20:00	Visit of social art projects, heritage walk in Leipzig		Organ concert ??? (Reformed Church)	Psalm Concert (Nikolai)
20:00-21:30		Dinner	Committees	Committees
22.00-23.00				

Date	Wednesday, 5 July - day 7	Thursday, 6 July - day 8	Friday, 7 July - day 9	
Venue	Wittenberg	Messe	Messe	
Theme	Affirming the unity of the Church	"Living God, transform us"		
07:30-08:00		Business committee	Business committee	
08:00-08:30				
08:30-09:00		Worship / Bible Study 5 Commemoration Jan Hus	Devotion	
09:00-09:30			Decision 4	
09:30-10:00				
10:00-10:30	Worship (Schlosskirche)	Tea / Coffee	Tea / Coffee	
10:30-11:00	Voices from the WCRC in Dialogue with Martin Luther	Decision 3	Decision 4 (continued)	
11:00-11:30		Listening 4		
11:30-12:00			Closing Communion	
12:00-12:30	Visit of the World Exhibition			
12:30-13:00				
13:00-13:30		Lunch	Lunch	
13:30-14:00	Lunch			
14:00-14:30	Ceremonial Acts: 'Wittenberg Declaration', JDDJ, tree planting	Dialogue 4		
14:30-15:00				
15:00-15:30		Tea/Coffee		
15:30-16:00				
16:00-16:30				
16:30-17:00		Plenary 3 (Elections)		
17:00-17:30				
17:30-18:00				
18:00-18:30				
18:30-19:30	Dinner (Messe)	Dinner		
19:30-20:00				
20:00-21:30	Committees	Committees		
22:00-23:00	Evening Prayer (Reformed Church)	Evening Prayer (Reformed Church)		

## GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT: APPENDIX 2

	Living God	renew and transform	us	
Bible	“Living God” – [Dario Barolin]	“renew and transform” (Romans 12:1-2) – [Musa Dube]	“us” (Luke 4:16ff) – [Revelation Velunta]	
Theology	“Living God” – [Vuyani Vellem]	“renew and transform” – [Lilly Phiri]	“us” – [Anna Case Winters]	
Confessing processes	“Living God” – [Margit Ernst-Habib]	Churches engaging with racism - The significance of the Confession of Belhar – [Cliff Kirkpatrick]	Churches engaging with economic injustice – The significance of the Accra Confession – [Allen Boesak]	From Barmen to the peaceful revolution in Leipzig [Wolf Krötke]
Context	Reflection on the concept of empire after Accra – [Philip Peacock]	Women’s ordination [HyeRan Kim-Cragg]	Gender justice [Ofelia Ortega]	

### GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT: APPENDIX 3

**01: Thursday, 29 June, 10h00**

**Opening Service  
Nicolai Church**

Sermon: **Romans 12:1-2**

Readings: Matthew 5:2-16; Luke 1:46-55; Psalm 85 (to be aligned with Peace Prayer!)

Team: Christiane, Kathy, Chineta, ...

**02: Friday, 30 June**

**Morning Worship 1  
Messe**

Theme “Living God, you formed us”

Bible Study: Luke 4:16-21

Worship texts: **Genesis 12 (forming of God's people); Psalm 119:73-77 (Your hands have made and fashioned me ...);** Psalm 8

Team: Kathy, Ester, ...

**03: Friday, 30 June, 22h00**

**Evening Service  
Reformed Church**

“Worship in song”

no sermon

[team to be announced]

**04: Saturday, 1 July**

**Morning Worship 2  
Messe**

Theme “Living God, guide us” (“Help us to discern your will”)

Bible Study: Jeremiah 10:1-10

Worship texts: **Hebrews 4:12f (The word of God ...);** Psalm 139:23f

Team: Chineta, Gerardo, ...

**05: Sunday, 2 July, 9h30-10h15**

**Broadcasted Service  
Berlin Dom**

Sermon: **Luke 4 (Jesus proclaims Jubilee)**

Reading: Jeremiah 1:4-8; Micah 6; Luke 10:25-37

Team: Sabine, André, Gerardo, Helga, ....

**06: Monday, 3 July**

**Morning Worship 3  
Messe**

Theme: “Living God, renew us”

Bible Study: Psalm 85

Worship: **2Corinthians 5:11ff (Ministry of reconciliation);** Psalm 51; Ezechiel 36:25ff

Team: Alison, Dwight, Sabine, ...

**07: Monday, 3 July 17h00**

**Peace Prayer**

**Nicolai Church**

[team to be announced]

30-45 minutes

possible texts, in tradition of Peace Prayers: Matthew 5:2-16; Luke 1:46-55 (to be aligned with Opening Service!)

connecting to the people(+tourists) of Leipzig with some item, e.g. to attach something on

**08: Tuesday, 4 July**

**Morning Worship 4**

**Messe**

Theme: "Living God, reform us"

Bible Study: Matthew 15:21-28

Worship: **Matthew 15:21-28 (Syro-Phoenician woman)** (performance);

Philippians 2:1-5; Roman 12:3-8; Colossians 3:12-14

Team: Maria, Gerardo, ...

**09: Wednesday, 5 July, 10h00**

**Wittenberg Service**

[exact venue to be announced]

Sermon: **Matthew 25:31ff (The final judgement)**

Liturgy: Psalm 146; Psalm 46

Readings: Isaiah 56:1-8; Romans 1; John 10:10f

Recommendation: Communion

Team: Ester, Maria, ...

**10: Thursday, 6 July**

**Morning Worship 5**

**Messe**

Theme: "Living God, transform us"

(Memorial: Jan Hus)

Bible Study: Romans 12:1-2

Worship: **Luke 19:1-10 (Zacchaeus)**; Ephesians 4:17-24; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Revelation 21:1-5

Team: Nina, André, Christiane, ...

**11: Friday, 7 July, [time to be announced]**

**short devotion/morning prayer**

**Messe**

[team and theme to be announced]

**12: Friday, 7 July, 11h00**

**Closing and Sending Communion**

**Messe**

Theme: "Living God, send us"

Sermon: **Romans 12:(1-2)3-13**

Team: Dwight, Alison, Nina, ...



## GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT: APPENDIX 4

### Programme of the Day in Berlin (2 Jul 2017) – [Draft: May 2, 2016]

**Theme: Witness to the world**

#### Saturday, 1 July

Afternoon rehearsal: all persons involved in Sunday worship must be in Berlin

#### Sunday, 2 July

06:00 Departure from Leipzig (2:00 hours, 183km)  
*[breakfast will be served on the buses]*

08:30 Arrival in Berlin

09:00 Congregation to be seated in Berlin Dome  
*[Due to the broadcasting all congregants must be in the church before 9h00.]*

#### 09:30-10:15 Worship service broadcasted by ZDF in Berlin Dome

##### Character

- The service should be distinctly Reformed in character and should show the richness of Reformed worship to German and international TV audience.

##### Format

- The service is an international WCRC event held in the space of a significant local host.
- The worship shall be conducted in the form of a joint service organised by WCRC and UEK.
- There should be a point of entry for the local congregation.

##### Technicalities

- No translation during the service; congregants will receive programme with liturgy and sermon in all official languages. Sermon/parts of the liturgy that are not in German shall be broadcasted voiced over.

##### Content:

- Theme of the service: ???
- Text: Luke 4: 16-21
- Preacher: ???
- Liturgy: Worship Committee
- Music: Worship Committee

#### 10:30-11:00 Words of greeting in Berlin Dome

- Bishop P. Bosse Huber (UEK)
- Bishop M. Dröge, Berlin

- I. Schwätzer (Berlin Dome)
- Michael Müller (Mayor of Berlin)

**11:30-14:00 Reception by Federal Government  
(Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Werderscher Markt 1, 10117 Berlin)**

Participants

- Ambassadors from all countries represented on the GC,
- delegates and accredited visitors,
- invited guests ??? (NGOs, Brot für die Welt, WCC etc.)

Character

- the reception must be owned by WCRC
- it is an important occasion to express WCRC's witness on social justice to the political world

Programme

- Welcome by Foreign Minister Dr Steinmeier
- "Churches committed to justice"
- WCRC member churches addressing injustice world wide – "stories" by GC delegates
- Handing over of WCRC statement on justice  
*[public witness document, drafted with input from core groups and the Executive Committee, decided upon by the officers]*
- Invitation to light meal by Minister Dr Steinmeier
- Light meal

**15:30-18:00 (a) Solidary visits with diaconic institutions  
(b) Visits to historical sites in Berlin  
(c) Visits of congregations in Berlin**

Delegates shall be divided in groups of 25 according to interests indicated with registration.

18:00 Departure to Leipzig (Arrival 20:00)

20:30 Dinner (Messe)

## GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT: APPENDIX 5

### Programme of the Wittenberg Day (5 Jul 2017) – [Draft: 02.05.2016]

**Theme: Affirming the unity of the Church**

08.30 Departure from Leipzig (1:04 hours, 90km)

#### 10:00-11:00 Worship service

Site:

- Stage on Schlossplatz ??? (space for up to 5,000 people, in front of Schlosskirche)
- Stadtkirche ??? (seats 1,000 people)
- Tent ??? (seats 1,200 people)

Host:

- Bishop Bedford-Strohm, chair of the EKD Council, has been invited to be the host of the proceedings in Wittenberg. The precise meaning of this function still has to be clarified.

Content:

- Theme of the service: ???
- Text: Matthew 25:21-36
- Preacher: ???
- Liturgy: Worship Committee
- Music: Worship Committee

#### 11:00-12:00 “Reformation: Global, Diverse, and Ongoing”. Voices from the World Communion of Reformed Churches in dialogue with Martin Luther

#### 12:00-13:30 Visit of the ‘World exhibition’, Wittenberg

13:30 Lunch

#### 14:30-16:00 Ceremonial Acts

Site:

- cf. above or LWF presence at Luther Garden

Programme:

- Association to Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification (WCRC with LWF and Vatican and all the other associates (Anglican, Methodist, Mennonites)
- Presentation of Wittenberg Declaration (WCRC and LWF)
- Tree Planting at Luther Garden
  - Theme: Reformed-Lutheran unity
  - Presentation of Wittenberg Declaration
  - Tree planting

17:00 Departure from Wittenberg

18:30 Arrival in Leipzig

19:00 Dinner at Messe

## GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT: APPENDIX 6

### “Meet the World. Global Youth Gathering, Leipzig, 23-28 June 2017”

#### “Meet the world!”

- At the youth gathering you will meet young people from all around the world.
- We will experience Christian fellowship as we worship together, study the Bible with one another, and explore what it looks like to be a disciple of Christ in our unique contexts.
- We will consider how we can creatively contribute to God’s mission in the world, learn from one another, and build the kingdom of God in our world.

#### “Renew and transform”

- The youth gathering will take place just prior to the General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches that will meet in Leipzig under the theme, “Living God, renew and transform us.”
- The youth gathering will consider the topic “How can young people contribute to the spirit of the Reformation today?”
- Other areas of conversation might include:
  - Art – how can we express the Truth of the kingdom of God through created art? What unique witness might that have not only in Leipzig but in communities around the world?
  - Economics – in what ways can young adults reshape the understanding of our economic systems in light of God’s transformation?
  - Justice – in what arenas might God be calling young adults to new forms of justice around the world?

#### Who can attend the youth gathering?

- We invite **youth groups from all WCRC member churches.**
- At the gathering the groups will meet the youth delegates of the General Council and the stewards.

#### How can you obtain financial assistance?

- The youth gathering has no funds of its own to assist groups to come to Germany.
- Every youth group has to raise its own funds.
- **However, we call upon churches with financial resources to link up with their partners in the Global South and support their participation in the youth gathering!**

#### What can you do after the youth gathering?

- The youth gathering shall officially end on June 28. However, we encourage youth groups from churches outside Europe to team up with groups from Europe
- and to plan a joint programme for the week after the youth gathering.
- Together you could
  - stay in Leipzig and join the visitors’ programme of the General Council,
  - plan a joint programme in Germany
  - or plan a visit in the home country of the European group.

#### How can you register for the youth gathering?

- Please register your interest through the head office of your church with the General Council Coordinator: Hanns Lessing, Knochenhauer Straße 42, D-30159 Hannover, Germany [hanns.lessing@wrcr.eu](mailto:hanns.lessing@wrcr.eu)
- The coordinator will then provide all information about the registration process and the costs involved.

## GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT: APPENDIX 7

### Co-opted Staff Work Profile: Coordinator Youth Gathering “Meet the World”

#### The Youth Gathering “Meet the World”, June 23-28, 2017

The youth gathering stands in the tradition of the Reformed Youth Forum that convened youth delegates, stewards and visiting young people prior to the General Council meetings in Accra (2004) and Grand Rapids (2010). The programme gathers young people from Reformed Churches from all over the world.

The youth gathering will take place at the Begegnungszentrum Zwochau near Leipzig. We expect some 250-300 young people to attend (40 youth delegates, 70 stewards, 140-190 participants from youth groups of WCRC member churches).

At the gathering the young people

- will experience Christian fellowship
- and explore the contribution of young people to God’s mission to liberate this world.

The young people will take on the following activities:

- Bible studies
- Engagement with the theme of the General Council “Living God, renew and transform us”, particularly with activities concerning climate change and economic justice (post-growth movement).
- Participation in the social art projects during the General Council.

After the youth gathering the international participants may team up with European groups and plan a joint programme for the week after the youth gathering to either

- stay in Leipzig and join the visitors’ programme of the General Council,
- plan a joint programme in Germany
- or plan a visit in the home country of the European group.

Time frame:

- June 23-25: All participants will take part in the programme.
- As from June 26 the stewards will receive particular training and start their duties.
- On June 27-28 the youth delegates will take part at the Youth Pre-Council.

#### The task of the Coordinator Youth Gathering

The coordinator convenes the leadership team of the youth gathering. He/she works in collaboration with the General Council Coordinator and the other members of the leadership team.

The coordinator is the moderator of a team that shares the leadership in the preparation and facilitation of the youth gathering. He/she has the following responsibilities:

##### Preparation:

- Preparation and facilitation of finance applications.
- Contacting the WCRC member churches and informing them about the youth gathering (together with the members of the leadership team).

- Information about the financial structure of the youth gathering: Participating youth groups will have to raise their own expenses for travel and lodging. Financially stronger churches are requested to support their partners from the Global South.
- Linking up of interested youth groups from the Global South with potential supporters.
- Support the teaming of youth groups for joint programmes in the week after the youth gathering (together with the members of the leadership team).
  
- Convening the leadership team and coordinating programme development.
- Planning of projects (social art, concert etc.).
- Preparation and administration of the budget for the youth gathering (together with the General Council Coordinator).
- Preparation and facilitation of the registration process (together with the members of the leadership team).
  
- Stay in contact with the co-workers of the Begegnungszentrum Zwochau in order to prepare the youth gathering (accommodation, meals etc.).
- Oversee the logistical preparations (transport, excursion, health services etc.).

**Facilitation:**

- The coordinator together with the leadership team is responsible for the proceedings during the youth gathering.
- Coordination is divided among the members of the leadership team and applies to the following areas:
  - technical facilitation (contact to the staff of the Begegnungszentrum, financial administration, organisation of transport etc.);
  - programme coordination;
  - contact to the leaders of the different youth groups (team building);
  - Bible study and worship life;
  - social life;
  - overseeing of projects (social art, concert etc.).

**The work of the Coordinator Youth Gathering**

- The Coordinator Youth Gathering shall be delegated by his/her church to become a co-opted staff member of WCRC.
- The Coordinator Youth Gathering is part of the WCRC staff and works with the General Council Coordinator and the leadership team on the preparation and facilitation of the youth gathering.

**Time required for the coordination of the youth gathering:**

- From May 2016 to May 2017 the Coordinator Youth Gathering works three days per month in the preparation of the youth gathering.
- In 2017 the coordinator works full time in the period June 10 to July 1.

Hanns Lessing  
29.04.2016

## GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT: APPENDIX 8

### Co-opted Staff Work Profile: Coordinator Steward Programme

#### The Steward Programme

Stewards play an important role in the facilitation of the General Council in Leipzig. The 70 stewards (35 international, 35 from Germany) are between 18 and 30 years old. In the programme they will have the opportunity to share in the life and witness of the worldwide family of Reformed churches and to meet young people from around the world.

The stewards will work in the following fields:

- *Reception* – receive participants as they arrive, make sure they know where they are staying, assist people with directions, etc.
- *Administration* – help to prepare, sort and deliver documents, etc.
- *Communication* – assist in the press room, sort mail, deliver messages, answer telephones, post messages, etc.
- *Plenary Sessions/Section Meetings* – assist with distribution of documents, translation equipment, microphones, etc.
- *Worship* – assist worship leaders, distribute worship materials, etc.
- *Trips* – assist in the facilitation of the trips to Berlin and Wittenberg
- *Cultural events* – assist in the facilitation of the large Psalm Concert at the Nikolaikirche and the social art projects all over the city.

#### The tasks of the coordinator of the Steward Programme

The coordinator of the Steward Programme has the following responsibilities:

Preparation:

- Organisation of the call to the member churches and – in collaboration with the General Council coordinator – facilitation of the selection process.
- Facilitation of the registration process.
- Communication with the churches sending stewards to the Council.
- Selection of chief stewards (one international, one from Germany) who represent the voice of the stewards in the preparation and in the course of the Steward Programme).
- Preparation and organisation of the training programme for stewards.
- Preparation and supervision of the budget for the Steward Programme (in collaboration with the General Council Coordinator).
- Preparation of the work plan for the stewards.
- Organisation of a system of communication that will allow to reach the stewards.
- Preparation of the social and spiritual framework of the life of the stewards during the General Council (in collaboration with the chief stewards).
- Preparation and organisation of the sections of the stewards' components in Global Youth Gathering (in cooperation with the leadership of the youth gathering).

Coordination:

- The coordinator of the Steward Programme is one of the chief facilitators of the work of the General Council.



- He/she works with the General Council Coordinator to ensure the smooth operation of the proceedings.
- He/she is the main contact person for the stewards and – together with the chief stewards – accompanies them in situations where they need practical or spiritual support.
- He/she allocates the stewards according to the work plan.
- He/she responds – together with the General Council Coordinator – to unforeseen situations and provides steward capacity when needed

### The work of the coordinator of the steward programme

- The coordinator of the Steward Programme shall be delegated by his/her church to become a co-opted staff member of WCRC.
- The coordinator of the Steward Programme is part of the WCRC staff and works with the General Council Coordinator in the preparation and facilitation of the General Council.

### Time required for the coordination of the Steward Programme

- From May 2016 to May 2017 the coordinator of the Steward Programme works two days per month in the preparation of the Steward Programme.
- In 2017 the coordinator works full time in the period June 19 to July 9.

Hanns Lessing  
22.04.2016

## GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT: APPENDIX 9

### Concert "From deep distress" (working title)

#### *Character*

The concert attempts to give testimony to the expressiveness of the biblical Psalms in the present age. In all parts of the world people inside and outside of organized religious communities have resorted for centuries on the Psalter to express their pain, and to develop a language of hope that allows them to find hope and hold in situations experienced as hopeless. The biblical Psalms are the central reference for the spiritual life of Reformed churches for this reason.

The program juxtaposes commissioned compositions by the composers Geonyong Lee (Korea) and Cord Meijering (Netherlands) [see. Appendix 1 and 2] and classical works from the 17th, 19th, and 20th centuries that engage with the Psalms in the horizon of social conflicts. Compositions from Europe, America and Asia testify in their diversity to the power of the Psalms as a spiritual world language.

#### *Global reception*

Following the concert the commissioned compositions shall be disseminated to by the delegates in many countries. Delegates to the General Assembly take note material and the performing rights home and get in this way the opportunity to perform the composition in their home countries.

#### *Composition*

The composition of the concert is based on the antiphonal structure of the Psalms and presents the works performed in an overall context that demonstrates the dialectic of lament and confidence, as expressed in the biblical Psalms:

- Passages of lament and petition (A):  
The antiphonal composition begins with a passage of the lament. A commissioned work sets to music a text from the respective century. These pieces shall be performed by a chamber music ensemble.
- Passages of confidence and thanksgiving (B):  
These expression of pain are juxtaposed with settings of psalms of praise and thanksgiving from the respective century. These works shall be performed by a large ensemble.

This change is pursued in his musical realization chronologically over four centuries and opens into the present.

#### *1. Era (17th century)*

- (A): E.g. musical setting of the final chapter of the *Simplicissimus* by Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, reflecting the horrors of the 30 Years War (this setting is part of the commissioned composition. The contemporary text will be selected in consultation with the composer).
- (B): E.g. Heinrich Schütz "They that sow in tears" (work will be selected in collusion with the composers).

#### *2. Era (19th century)*

- (A): E.g. musical setting of the memoirs of Solomon Northup "Twelve years a slave" from 1853 (this setting is part of the commissioned composition. The contemporary text will be selected in consultation with the composers).
- (B): excerpts from Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy "As pants the hart".

*3. Era (20th century)*

- (A): E.g. musical setting of Dalit Poetry from India or from Minyung Poetry of Korea (this setting is part of a commissioned composition. The contemporary text will be selected in consultation with the composers).
- (B): E.g. Chichester Psalms by Leonard Bernstein (work will be selected in consultation with the composers).

*4. Era (present)*

- Here the commissioned composition by Geonyong Lee and Cord Meijering shall link lament and confidence: A melody of confidence mixes in the setting of lament and petition from the present time that holds the lamentation and sets it into a more hopeful context. In this final composition gradually all the musicians of the evening join into a big psalmody of hope. Here the audience should be included.

*Facts and people*

**Date:**

July 4, 2017

**Place:**

Nikolai Church, Leipzig

**Concert planning:**

Christiane Bräutigam (cantor of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Leipzig), Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Holmer, Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Lessing (Musikhochschule Dresden)

**Composers (commissioned work):**

Geonyong Lee (Korea), Cord Meijering (Netherlands)

**Works by:**

Heinrich Schütz, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdi, Leonard Bernstein

**Artistic Director:**

Christiane Bräutigam (Leipzig)

**Orchestra, chamber ensemble:**

Mendelssohn Orchestra (Leipzig),  
SpielART. Ensemble for New Music (lecturers of Musikhochschule Dresden)

**Choirs:**

Kantorei the Evangelical Reformed Church in Leipzig,  
Chamber Choir for New Sounds (Leipzig)

## GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT: APPENDIX 10

### General Council 2017 – Travel and accommodation reimbursements [Draft: May 3, 2016]

#### 1 Guidelines

##### 1.1 *Member church delegates*

- a) Reimbursements are provided to ensure fair participation of delegations of WCRC member churches that are composed according to constitutional requirements.

In view of the limited resources available, member churches should first ensure that all other avenues of support have been explored. The WCRC staff will document their discussion with the member church confirming that efforts have been made to cover participation costs by other means.

There is eligibility for a reimbursement

- where it is understood that there would be difficulty in financing the full participation of the delegation;
- the membership contribution from 2010 to 2015 has been paid;
- and a request for a reimbursement has been made to the General Secretary by 31 December 2016. In exceptional circumstances this period may be extended.

A proposal for reimbursement is then made by the General Secretary, subject to the priorities for allocation described below.

In certain circumstances of known financial difficulty, and subject to the same priorities for allocation described below, the General Secretary may contact the member church proposing a reimbursement.

- b) Priorities for the allocation of a reimbursement will be:

Reimbursements will be allocated using the following criteria, ensuring equal percentage of reimbursement for delegates of member churches:

- Churches whose delegations conform to the constitutional criteria regarding women, youth and lay persons;
- Churches which have paid membership contributions from 2010 to 2015;
- Churches which have paid travel, accommodation and registration fees for at least one delegate.

- c) Processing the allocation of reimbursements:

If the proposal for reimbursement is accepted by the church, the WCRC will assist the delegate with practical arrangements, organise accommodation and book the most reasonably priced ticket available for purchase.

If the church or delegate opts to arrange his/her own travel,

- The church or delegate will be responsible for making the travel arrangements, and for informing the WCRC of arrival and departure details;
- The **travel subsidy will be limited to the price which would have been obtained by the WCRC at the stated target date;**
- **Accommodation arrangements** that have **not** been **formally agreed upon** with the WCRC will **not be subject to subsidy;** and
- a travel reimbursement claim must be presented by the delegate to the WCRC finance office during the General Council. Reimbursements subject to the conditions of this policy will be made after the assembly.

### *1.2 Consultants and co-opted staff invited by the WCRC*

The WCRC will contact the person's church / organisation and pay all expenses which are not paid by a person's church / organisation in accordance with the travel and accommodation expense policy.

### *1.3 Guests invited by the WCRC*

The WCRC will offer accommodation and meals and/or travel expenses where necessary.

### *1.4 Other participants*

Other delegated representatives, delegated observers, observers and members of the retiring executive committee not named as delegates will cover their own costs.

### *1.5 Exceptions*

Any exception concerning eligibility for a reimbursement requires the approval of the general secretary.

## **2 Reimbursement coverage**

The following expenses will be covered for participants receiving reimbursement:

#### 1) Return travel to Leipzig:

The cost of a direct flight, economy fare, from the airport of departure from the participant's country of residence to Leipzig and return without undue stop-overs, unless a break is required because the duration of the trip exceeds 18 hours, in which case the WCRC would cover the cost of meals and a moderately priced hotel. If the participant purchases the ticket, the lowest rate available at the stated target date – either if purchased by the WCRC or purchased in the country of residence – will be reimbursed.

#### 2) Accommodation and meals for the duration of the General Council:

If the participant has arranged his/her own accommodation in agreement with the WCRC, reimbursement will be made up to the equivalent amount for which accommodation would have cost if it had been arranged by the WCRC or the amount of the accommodation if arranged by the participant, whichever being the lowest.

#### 3) The following expenses are considered the **minimum contribution** to be made by the church/participant and will not be reimbursed by the WCRC:

- Registration fee;
- Travel related – visa fees, internal transportation costs, travel taxes, etc.;
- Accommodation related – WIFI, telephone, room service, or other personal charges.