

Report of the General Secretary

1. I begin my report giving thanks to the Living God for the rich and deep witness and work of our member churches, our officers group, our staff and our many networks and working groups who have sought in the past year to live out our identity as a global *koinonia*, “called to communion and committed to justice” in a world fallen among thieves.
2. We gather in Seoul, South Korea, sharply aware of the places in God’s creation and among all God’s creatures where life is under threat at every conceivable level, and no place more volatile, with a greater impact on the whole world than the Korean peninsula.
3. At the same time an unexpected and dramatic miracle of peace is bursting forth, showing the fruit of God’s grace and persistent love in the work and witness of those who have struggled for democracy, human rights, justice, peace and reconciliation—foremost among them the Korean churches and ecumenical movement in both North and South.
4. The Inter-Korean Summit and the Panmunjom Declaration of 27 April 2018 has been embraced by the political leadership in both Koreas and the churches in the South and North have whole-heartedly assumed the hard but hope-filled imperative to “affirm, support and encourage” the path to peace and reconciliation for the Korean peninsula, the Northeast Asia region and the world which this Korean-led, courageous initiative embodies. The World Council of Church (WCC) and our own Communion have redoubled all efforts in action and prayer to mobilize the global Christian family to respond vigorously and faithfully to this God-given and Spirit-filled historical opening for peace, justice and reconciliation in obedience to the gospel imperative of peace with justice.
5. Our Communion at the Leipzig General Council witnessed the presence of the Korean Christian Federation (KCF), National Council of Churches of Korea (NCCCK) and our Korean member churches praying for peace and holding high the cross as the sign of unity and the justice the God of Life wills to us. We have sought in this past year to accompany them in the spirit of our communion.
6. Only a few days ago our joint WCC-WCRC delegation to Pyongyang heard the affirmations of the Minister of Unification of South Korea, H.E. Cho Myong-Gyon, and then directly from the President of the People’s Assembly of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, H.E. Kim Yong Nam, how the religious communities in North and South have played a key and determining role in shaping this moment. Unexpectedly both emphasized the role played by the WCC and specifically the WCRC in accompanying our member churches.
7. My journey to Pyongyang started with a visit to Lebanon to encourage the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL)—our president’s own denomination—in their courageous ministry and witness in Syria and Lebanon, a situation where solutions for peace, justice and reconciliation are not easy to detect. From there I went to meet with an ecumenical panel to reinvigorate our joint efforts for economic and ecological justice and transformation of an economic and financial system that fuels militarization and conflict and makes very few very wealthy at the expense of the very many. And then I traveled from New York to Bogota, Colombia, where a global gathering of a large sector of world

Christianity met to reflect and celebrate together in the context of a peace process under threat and at the edge of collapse. Again acting ecumenically, the WCRC accompanied our member church in concrete actions to bolster the system of transitional justice and encourage the special court to remain firm to their mandate at the same time: an attempted pastoral visit to the jailed FARC peace negotiator who is on hunger strike against the illegal attempts to extradite him to the USA rather than allow the agreed upon justice process to work.

8. In the face of desperate situations where hope is fading or fragile our churches are present, discerning, confessing, witnessing and reforming. In the span of a week I was able to see the embodiment of a global *koinonia* “called to communion and committed to justice” and to see the vision and challenges set out in Leipzig come to life.
9. I am making this report on the life and work of the WCRC since the General Council under the theme, “From Life, For Life: Transforming, Reconciling, Renewing” and am humbled to affirm that our Communion, although beset with many challenges, is emerging as a *koinonia* witnessing to the strong words of Paul: “All of this from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).
10. In the face of a grim and deteriorating global situation our Communion joins with others in our frailty and see in the example of the unexpected surge towards peace in the Korean peninsula the transforming work of the God of Life—grace writ large—and we see the years upon years of the sacrifice and justice seeking witness of the faithful in our member churches who against all odds—hope against all hope witnessed to the God of Life, confessing Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit, and today I am therefore bold to say the words of Paul, “Therefore we have this ministry through God’s ministry and we are not discouraged.”

The Bridge Plan

11. The Address of the President has lifted up the highlights of the General Council and some of its positive impact and has underlined key challenges and concerns. In this report I will make a condensed summary of the activities and situation of the WCRC since Leipzig in light of the “Bridge Plan between Strategic Plans, July 2017 – May 2018” adopted by the officers to guide our work in this period. The plan has been circulated and is available on the website.
12. As indicated in the Bridge Plan the officers and the secretariat focused on three streams of activities and actions in this last year:
13. Closing the General Council, which is to say ensuring that all details of the highlight successful but very complex General Council are properly wrapped up and reported. This has been an extensive and intense process on all levels. We have given priority to this as reflected below in the General Council report and the financial report. It has gone well. We end with great impact, many learnings and no financial burden.
14. Continuing and follow-up on the programmatic priorities under the final chapter of the 2011-2017 Strategic Plan on each of the five basic directions. The WCRC has continued to focus on selected priority areas of the last plan to ensure continuity and impact in the spirit

of our calling and mandate. Over all the programmatic activities outlined in the Bridge Plan have all been successfully implemented, most with significant impact; the exceptions and mid-course adjustments are detailed below in the relevant sections of the report. An example of adjustment of the Bridge Plan was the decision under Mission to move the so-called “Mission in the Frontlines” from late 2018 to early 2019 and place it in the context of the proposed strategic plan to allow for better planning, implementation, integration and impact.

15. The strategic planning process: the Bridge Plan not only served to guide us until the new strategic plan was in place, in fact, the strategic planning process was itself one of the three streams of the plan itself! The strategic planning process and proposed strategic plan is at the center of our discernment and decision-making in this Executive meeting. At this point I want to report that the “process” as outlined in the Bridge Plan has been successfully completed with a well-structured, well-thought-out, highly participative consultative process guided by the officers and a very effective Strategic Planning Committee chaired by the general secretary of the Church of South India and including in addition to the WCRC officers, general secretaries of our key ecumenical and mission partners and other noted leaders and experts within the Communion. A wide variety of working groups and consultations provided extensive input in a short period of time, all focused on harvesting and implementing the vision, direction and mandates of the General Council in light of the core mission of the WCRC. The proposed plan seeks to set out a path for the next six years that is faithful but strategic.
 - a. It is not simply a wise list of activities. It is not a work plan (yet). It is an exercise in discernment that sets out how we can proceed to live out the call and commitments that God has given us.
 - b. The approach of the strategic planning process was to plan so that vision and values of the General Council mandates were embodied in the process itself. So the process itself was an exercise in communion strengthening and commitment to justice. The Widening the Circle Consultation already pushed us forward with our tasks of critical theological reflection and “reforming” our life as a communion so that all voices are heard and power imbalances are redressed.
 - c. Staff, officers and many, many others have worked hard to prepare this plan for your consideration, and I believe that that process alone has already had a positive impact in our maturing as a global *koinonia*.
16. My report and the details that follows is to be read as accounting for and giving details of our implementation of the Bridge Plan. All our activities and programmes have been carried out to fulfill the objectives of one or more of the three streams of the plan: 1) closing, 2) continuing, 3) planning. We have done this so that each of the three streams complement the other so that no one stream overwhelms the other. The results have been extremely positive, but it has been very intense and for the staff at times stressful and exhausting. The energy within the Communion and staff is high and commitment great. The results reported

below show that we have emerged from the General Council motivated and inspired yet well aware of challenges, limitations and weaknesses.

17. A significant challenge is the intersection of sustainability and capacity. As the Address of the President and the proposed strategic plan emphasize we still struggle to financially sustain our secretariat and governance life from membership contributions. Although our reserves are growing, and we are relatively stable with a good and growing capacity to raise programme funds, we still are not able to fund our core budget for salaries, governance, secretariat without additional last-minute fundraising every year. This has many implications: 1) We are constantly preoccupied in the course of every year with raising money for that year itself and are distracted from our core mission. 2) It means we remain limited in our capacity to a very small staff. I will expand on this below but one of the most frequent observations is that for such a large Communion with such a tiny global staff who perform and deliver well above what could be reasonably be expected of only four full time executives. 3) Our values as a Communion are undermined when we don't have sufficient funds for governance activities; we can't get to the point where only those churches who can afford to pay for the expenses of Executive Committee members can participate in governance. We are not currently in a sustainable place with our core budget. This needs our urgent attention as an Executive and it is taken up in the proposed strategic plan.

Staff Transitions and Thanks

18. Since General Council 2017 there have been significant staff changes. But now our team is in place! Immediately following General Council, Rev. Dr. Douwe Visser took early retirement following an extended health leave. Allow me to reiterate our gratitude to Douwe as reflected in my report to the General Council for his long list of contributions.
19. At the end of 2017, Rev. Dora Arce Valentin completed her term of service and returned to Cuba and her work within the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba. Again, deepest thanks and profound gratitude to Dora for her significant contributions and great Impact on the justice and gender justice work.
20. For 2017, although it was an extraordinarily intense year with many activities beyond the intensity of the General Council itself, we were under-staffed during the entire year, especially in the area of theology, mission and communion.
21. As noted in my report to General Council, Rev. Dr. Aruna Gnanadason served as a consultant and directed the Global Institute of Theology. We are extremely grateful to Aruna and could not have accomplished what we did without her. At the same time and after the then-General Council coordinator Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing took on the extra task of attending to the ecumenical dialogues, Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) and Wittenberg Witness follow-up among other things including accompanying me on an important visit to China at the same time as giving attention to the priorities of "closing General Council." Hanns truly rose to service beyond the call of duty, and we are so thankful to him and for the high quality of his contributions.

22. As announced at the General Council, Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing and Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock were appointed as Executive Secretaries for Communion & Theology and Justice & Witness respectively, beginning in these positions in January 2018.
23. With the faithful and highly effective leadership of Phil Tanis as executive secretary for communications, for the first time for several years we now have a well-functioning, highly effective executive staff team free from the disruptions of transitions, relocation of the office and major illnesses. The team in the few months has come together well and are highly motivated and extremely effective as the strategic planning proposal gives ample testimony.
24. Rev. Philip Peacock streamed in on several events last year including in our planning week, and it can be said he truly hit the ground running and we are so grateful.
25. The executive staff team has, however, been put in place with a very critical challenge of having four men form the team. This is a serious contradiction of our values even as we affirm the talents and effectiveness of the team. The concrete steps to redress this are addressed in the proposed strategic plan.
26. We continue to enjoy and benefit from the contribution of Gerhard Plenter who serves on a volunteer basis as our Consultant Financial Executive. He works tirelessly for us on top of his other duties and we owe him a great vote of appreciation, not least for his work at and following the General Council.
27. Anna Krüger continues to offer extraordinary service as our financial administrative assistant who has shouldered in an exemplary way the double challenge of General Council accounting and our already challenging financial work. She works closely with member churches in terms of membership contributions where her sensitivity and experience has helped strengthen our relationships. Anna contributes also as able to the communications work. Greatest appreciation to Anna! The finance desk has been supported by many additional volunteers and with special assistance from the Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany for the General Council work.
28. Werner Joecker continued as administrative assistant for the work of the Reformed Partnership Fund and the *Otto per Mille* funds of the *Tavola Waldense*. In addition, Werner plays a major role in the management of the database system. Werner's determined and efficient work has been most appreciated.
29. Amritha Permulla Bosi, the administrative assistant for the programme team, has been on maternity leave. We have rejoiced in the birth of her second child and hope she will be back with us in the coming year. In the meantime we are delighted to have Emelda Ndipewah replacing Amritha during her leave. Many will know Emelda for her helpful contributions planning and arranging travel for special events.
30. Katrina Mertz is the assistant for the general secretary and has made a very significant contribution in helping rebuild the administrative and office systems and structures after the move, plus the daunting task of organizing the general secretary and his travels. Katrina

works as well in the coordination and support of governance structures and the Constitution and Membership Committee, as well as attending to the administrative aspects of human resources. She is tireless and fully committed to the WCRC. Greatest thanks to Katrina. She holds together the many complex strands of our work and relationships.

31. We are grateful for the work of Paul Oppenheim who has served as our senior volunteer and helped us mightily in our transition to Hannover and during the General Council. Paul is now “retired” for the second time.
32. Other staff support is offered by the EKD, and we would like to make special reference to the work of Elfriede Abrams, who is a church lawyer who supports our human resources work.
33. We have received the report from the United Nations office and want to make special mention of Ryan Smith, the director of that ministry at the UN in New York City who is part of our greater staff family for all his faithful service.
34. In a special category we have our WCRC interns who are on the one hand full members of our team during their year of service and at the same time they have a special focus on leadership development.
35. In 2017, Miguel Rosa of the PC(USA) and Wan-Jou Lin of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan were our two interns. Wan-Jou stayed on from 2016 in order to help with the General Council in addition to a third intern, Grenna Kaiya, who was supported by the Council for World Mission (CWM), to add capacity during the General Council year.
36. Currently we have two interns, Eri Yoon from the Presbyterian Church in Korea, and Anam Gill of the Presbyterian Church in Pakistan. With funds available from EMW and the Swiss Cantonal Churches of Bern, we will have a third intern starting this coming fall.
37. We are extremely grateful to the interns who make such a significant contribution. We are committed, as reflected in the proposed strategic plan, to strengthening and expanding the internship programme as possible.

Visits and Activities

38. In addition to the sections of the report below, the general secretary has carried out visits and activities with our member churches through the Communion in the last year. This has included attending and speaking at special events and assemblies as was the case with the Church of North India Reformation General Assembly, a special Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of India, the Presbyterian Church of Colombia Reformation 500 activities, the Synod of the Nile and churches in Egypt, partner consultations of the NESSL, visit to Damascus, a pastoral visit to our churches in South Sudan accompanied by PC(USA), visits to member churches in South Korea and North Korea, visit to the China Christian Council, the United Church of Zambia, the Presbyterian Church of Iran in Exile, the Church of South India, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, and accompanying a mediation process with

ECO and PC(USA) in the United States. I have participated in regional council gatherings and supported the work of AIPRAL, NEAAC, WCRC Europe and ACRC.

39. These have been intense and rewarding encounters of communion building and theological learning. Many challenges which are reflected and have been taken up in the proposed strategic plan.
40. As part of the Bridge Plan, the general secretary has focused on supporting key global peace and reconciliation initiatives. The significant work on the Korean peninsula has already been mentioned.
41. The Middle East, Israel/Palestine and Syria have received attention through visits, the Palestinian organizations through a meeting in Jordan (see the proposed strategic plan for follow-up), to Lebanon, Egypt and participation in global interfaith peace events.
42. Direct involvement in the Colombia peace process, supporting the work of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia (IPC), DiPaz and supporting broader ecumenical initiatives including speaking at a panel with Colombia President Santos and meeting with the High Commissioner for Peace and supporting the demobilizing former guerillas and the IPC's Peace Diakonia Programme.
43. South Sudan has been mentioned as a special focus, and more can be found in the proposed strategic plan.
44. Ecumenical work on the global level is noted below but to briefly highlight participation in the Reference Group for the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace of the WCC where I serve as co-rapporteur.
45. The ecumenical global dimension of WCRC role has meant special attention has been given to our participation in WCC, Global Christian Forum, Conference of Secretaries of World Christian Communions and in partnerships with the Council for World Mission, the World Student Christian Federation and the World Alliance of Christian Communicators.
46. The double work of accompanying the churches of the Communion and providing leadership and support for wider ecumenical family has been significantly advanced in the last year in part due to General Council and in part due to strategic investment in global processes of justice, peace and reconciliation and ecumenical dialogue.

The General Council

Figures

47. In the perception of the participants, the General Council 2017 was a very successful event. 74% of those participating in the evaluation described the Council as "exciting" or "very exciting" and 74% commended the good atmosphere in particular.
48. A large majority also agreed that the constitutional objective of just participation was reached. 70% concurred that men and women participated equally. This mirrors the fact

that gender balance was almost achieved: 48% of the delegates attending the Council were women and 52% men. The aim of increasing the voice of the youth was also largely accomplished. The decision to invite the GIT students and to grant them voice in the discernment process allowed for much stronger youth participation as provided for under the Constitution. The survey reflects this achievement: Not fewer than 64% of the participants agreed with the statement that the youth could fully take part at the General Council.

49. The participation of the regions, however, was apparently an issue. Only 45% of the participants of the evaluation agreed that participants from all regions participated equally. This observation is significant. The next General Council planning process should develop methodologies that will allow people from all different cultural backgrounds to contribute fully to the proceedings.
50. While the overwhelming majority of participants personally regarded the Council as a significant and rewarding experience, several contributors flagged the relationship between the WCRC and the member churches as an area that needed attention: Only 47% agreed that the General Council had improved relationships between the Communion and the member churches.
51. The evaluation did not explore the relationship between the WCRC and its member churches in more depth. This observation therefore might therefore be not more than a snapshot that does not carry much validity. At the same time, the number of member churches attending the General Council in Leipzig was considerably smaller than in Grand Rapids. Grand Rapids gathered 183 delegations, in Leipzig the number declined to 136 (cf. appendix 1).
52. There are several reasons for this decrease. Some have to do with priorities in the member churches; others were rather of administrative nature. After the move from Geneva, the WCRC's database was in a very poor shape. We did not have current contact data of more than a third of the membership. For this reason, we could send invitations to several churches only quite late in the process. We are glad that after the Council we are now in contact with almost all members and ask the members of the Executive Committee to share changes in leadership that they discover with the secretariat in Hannover.
53. We are very grateful that we were able to support travel and accommodation of all delegations from the Global South. This assistance was made possible by large donations by the German Ministry and Foreign Affairs and of Bread for the World that explicitly offered funds to allow the full participation of delegates of the Global South. We observed, however, that the stipulation of the subsidy policy that every member churches should pay the registration fees and the travel and accommodation for at least one delegate discouraged several churches from attending the assembly. Even if the General Council office engaged with the churches to overcome these obstacles several churches decided to rather stay at home. This experience should be taken into consideration in the formulation of upcoming subsidy policies. With the perspective of decreasing funds in the future, intensive communication with the member churches will be necessary to find alternative ways of fundraising.

54. Like in Grand Rapids, a number of potential participants were not granted visas, which would have allowed them to travel to Germany. The WCRC enjoys a special relationship with the German government that includes preferential access to visas for attendants of WCRC programmes. Despite the enormous efforts by the visa coordinator, Paul Oppenheim, and the support by the German embassies and consulates all over the world the application of 50 potential participants were turned down.
55. Some visas were refused because delegates registered in the very last minutes. Some processes need time and require the cooperation of everyone. The organization of future events would be much easier if participants will abide more carefully to the timelines. Generally, however, the participants of the Council cooperated very well in the registration process. All co-workers of the General Council office agree that even if the work was often stressful the communication with the participants was a real joy.

Finances

56. The General Council would not have been possible without the generous support by member churches and other donors. We say thank you to the member churches that paid their General Council contributions; several gave even more than the required amount. And we are grateful for the donations of the German member churches, of churches and church institutions in Germany that are not members and of the German government. Without this support, the Council would have to be organized in a very different way. The assembly benefitted from the rich resources that churches and the government provided for the quincentennial of the Reformation. The General Council was the most significant international event of the commemoration and therefore received generous support. We particularly thank our General Treasurer Johann Weusmann for his tireless efforts in fundraising.
57. Thanks to these contributions, the books of the Council could be closed without a deficit. The final audits are currently under way and the WCRC's finance team receives praise for the meticulous bookkeeping. We thank the German churches that seconded highly professional staff to the finance team! The good stewardship has improved the WCRC's standing with important donor agencies particularly in Germany.
58. At the same time, the final figures also point to the financial challenges of future General Councils. The contributions of member churches and the General Council reserve of the WCRC did not even cover a third of the total expenses. Even if one subtracts the budgets of the cultural programmes and the Global Institute of Theology the income of 0,9 million raised by the Communion fell short of expenses of 2,7 million for the actual assembly (cf. appendix 2). The next General Council in 2024 will depend on substantial fundraising. If it will not be possible to raise the necessary funds, the Council will have to be redesigned to match the available resources.

Administration and Logistics

59. We are very glad that the evaluation of the General Council administration in the survey is quite favourable. 64% of the participants rated the travel assistance as good or very good, 63% appreciated the travel assistance and still 58% gave a positive feedback to the

assistance in subsidy matters. Even the registration process where we experienced substantial problems received a positive feedback by 60% of the participants.

60. We appreciate this assessment because we are aware of the challenges of the administrative process. In the planning process and the actual arrangements, we encountered a number of difficulties and worked hard to deal with them. For the benefit of future planning teams, I want to point to some of these challenges:

- In the secretariat, there was no institutional memory of the preparation of general councils. No staff member had ever participated in the planning. We are therefore particularly thankful for the organizers of the Grand Rapids Council and the staff of the WCC for their support.
- Because of the move to Germany and of changes in the WCRC staff, the administrative preparation only started two years prior to the Council. In the future, a General Council coordinator should be employed three years before the event.
- The German member churches of the WCRC are comparably small; the Reformed congregation in Leipzig is numerically marginal in the city. The organization of the Council therefore brought everyone who was involved to the limits of the possible. The situation in Leipzig was very different to that in Grand Rapids where the organization was supported by two offices of much larger member churches and by the staff of a church owned college. We are extremely thankful for the support that the German churches and the Leipzig congregation provided under these challenging circumstances!
- The Leipzig Messe offered a very professional environment, which was very helpful for the organization of the Council. At the same time however, the rent was much more expensive than in a church owned place and the sheer amount of options required enormous capacity for proper planning and implementation.
- The General Council office was mainly staffed with interns and volunteers without professional experience in event management. Everyone worked with incredible effort and much enthusiasm and we are extremely grateful for their wonderful work! However, the task would have been much easier if we had had the same professional support as in the area of finance also with data base development and travel and accommodation management.
- Because of the small staff, the WCRC secretariat could only provide limited management capacity for detail planning and the recruitment and accompaniment of volunteers. This was particularly noticeable in the organization of the Leipzig back office, the workflow in the plenary and in the work of the Nomination and the Public Issues committees. For the future, it would be very helpful if member churches could second skilled people for management tasks already before the Council. This would contribute to much smoother and professional proceedings particularly during the first days of the assembly.
- The lack of management capacity also affected the communication prior to the General Council. Several participants of the survey complained that information had arrived late, which caused some anxiety for some. Many people also pointed out that the delays in communication did not allow them to prepare properly for the event. This feedback should also be taken up in the planning of future councils.

61. Many of these obstacles were compensated, however, by the enormous engagement of volunteers and staff during the Council itself. Their presence and enthusiasm contributed to the general sense of togetherness that was characteristic for the assembly. Participants were willing to accept logistical shortcomings because they realized that members of the Communion were working hard for the best of the Communion. This experience of joint responsibility gives us great confidence that also future councils can be carried out successfully.

Discernment and Consensus

62. The feedback to the discernment and consensus model applied at the Council was quite positive. More than 50% of the responses described the different elements of the process as a success. Only a minority responded negatively. Many individual comments in the survey praised the Discernment Groups as a particularly enriching experience. It was pointed out that in these groups everyone had the chance to contribute to the decisions of the Council. Many respondents had preferred if there was more time for the discussions because they offered the opportunity to deeply converse with other participants of the assembly. Several participants suggested that in the future more emphasis should be laid on the training of the moderators and scribes of the groups. People saw also some room for improvement in the discernment training, which only 51% evaluated positively.
63. The Listening Sessions were also received good feedback (56%). In the individual comments however, we also found some critical remarks. People complained that the General Council workbook with the proposals arrived too late to allow proper discussion of the issues in the member churches. Others indicated that the background papers were too long to be discussed in detail. The responses indicate that these people had preferred, if the traditional section model had been used again, because they were of the opinion that the formation of interest specific groups had allowed a more professional discussion.
64. The survey participants also gave a general positive feedback to the decision-making in the plenary (55%). At the same time however, some individual remarks were particularly critical. Serious concern was expressed how the proceedings dealt with minority opinions. Critique was raised from two different directions: Some comments stated that minority positions received much too much attention. On the other hand, other contributors complained that the pressure to give in to the view of the majority had been enormous. These people also criticized that in their perception the orange and blue cards had been used at times in a manner of voting in order to suppress dissenting minorities.
65. Despite these criticism, the majority of responses agreed that the discernment and consensus model should also be employed in the future. Several people pointed out that changes like the introduction of the discernment model needed time to mature and develop. We therefore think that the discernment and consensus procedures were applied successfully during the assembly and want to express our gratitude to the Discernment Team that developed and refined the discernment model.

Worship and Bible Studies

66. The worship and Bible studies received the most positive feedback in the survey. People praised the spiritual atmosphere (68%) and the music (77%) and expressed their

appreciation for the worship in the Berlin Cathedral (66%) and particularly in Wittenberg (78%). We would like to thank the Worship Team for their wonderful work!

67. The Bible studies were generally appreciated. Many people indicated that the sessions would have worked even better if there had been more time for the Bible study groups. It appears that for many participants the encounter with other delegates and the sharing in small groups were the most significant experiences during the Council.

Content and Vision

68. 60% of the participants agreed that the General Council produced a vision for the work of the WCRC. A strong majority gave a positive feedback about the selection of themes (63%), the choice of speakers (68%) and the quality of the inputs (65%). Many people individually registered their appreciation of the Wittenberg event, of the adoption of the Faith Declaration on Women's Ordination and of the emphasis on justice.
69. At the same time, a substantial number of people registered complains about the excessive weight, the one-sidedness and the quality of the input sessions. These responses indicate that the justice agenda of the WCRC is still not yet fully embraced by parts of the Communion.
70. In answer to the question where the WCRC will be in the future, most of the responses pointed to communion and to justice. The participants hope that the WCRC will develop into a Communion where women and youth will participate even more fully. In addition, they want the WCRC to become an even stronger instrument of change in church and society. Some participants, however, used this question as an opportunity to register their concern about the future of the organization and pointed to the tensions in the Communion and its fragile financial sustainability.

Thanks and Gratitude

71. The Proceedings of the 2017 General Council lists the names of 165 volunteers and 67 stewards that contributed to the success of the General Council. Many of them had offered their time for months. During the assembly, they worked day and night. We particularly want to thank the General Council Planning Committee that supervised the planning and implementation of this big project.
72. The WCRC is blessed by so many people who offer their gifts to the work of the organisation. Their joyful and wholehearted engagement is proof that the WCRC is able to inspire people and bring the good news of the living God who renews and transforms humanity and all creation to the whole world.

Communion

73. In its section on communion the Bridge Plan took up the invitation of General Council Action 50 to set an "atmosphere for dialogue and discernment on communion diversity" that would allow the discussion of the controversial matters of human sexuality "in a spirit of consensus building where there are no winners or losers, where no one is excluded, where

all are protected and where mutual challenge, mutual accountability and grace become key values.”

74. The General Council was very much aware that currently not all member churches are ready to engage in this conversation. It therefore encouraged those churches who are prepared to begin this difficult journey to embrace our diversity and our differences and to discern together the resources of Scripture and our Reformed tradition. Moreover, it called upon the WCRC to accompany also those member churches and regional councils who still hesitate to join into this discussion.
75. In the spirit of this decision the WCRC convened the consultation “Strengthening the Communion: Communion and Human Sexuality” in November in Chennai, India, and invited representatives of churches with different views on human sexuality to engage with each other by sharing experiences and by joint discernment of Scripture.
76. Many of the participants expressed their appreciation for the atmosphere of the consultation. They welcomed the approach not to strive for decisions on matters of human sexuality, but rather to attempt to open a space for a meaningful conversation. At the end, the participants adopted a statement in which they committed themselves to continued conversation in the spirit of respect, love, trust and listening to a variety of voices including those most affected.
77. This commitment was included into the draft of the Strategic Plan and, if finally adopted, will guide the WCRC’s approach to the conversation about human sexuality in the current period of its work.

Justice

New International Financial and Economic Architecture

78. In 2010, as part of the vision to live out the Accra Confession, the Uniting General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches called upon its member churches, in partnership with other ecumenical bodies, to prepare an international ecumenical conference to propose a financial and economic architecture that is based on the principles of economic; social and climate justice; serves the real economy; accounts for social and economic tasks; and sets clear limits to greed.
79. This call resonated with the WCC’s central committee’s “Statement on Just Finance and Economy of Life and the Council for World Mission’s theological statement, “Mission in the Context of Empire.”
80. It is against this background that the WCRC, WCC and CWM jointly convened the Conference on New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in September-October 2012. The conference produced the Sao Paulo Statement that lamented the present economic crisis and called for a rejection of empire and complicity with systems of death. At the same time it called for an affirmation of movements and radical traditions that seek to build life in community outside the logic of hierarchy and discrimination.

81. Based on this mandate a panel of thirteen experts were convened as the Global Ecumenical Panel on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture to give “legs” to the Sao Paulo Statement and to recommend areas of action to the WCRC, WCC, CWM and the LWF. This panel worked to produce a document entitled “Economy of Life for All Now: An Ecumenical Action Plan for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture.”
82. This document made a series of recommendations and proposals for actions for the ecumenical collective. Among the concrete actions proposed, the ecumenical school of Governance, Economics and Management (GEM School) was identified as the first among six priorities.

GEM School

83. Realizing that our churches’ ethical, moral and theological perspectives on the global economy have a minimal impact on financial and economic policies, business practices and ways of thinking. The GEM school was initiated as an attempt to build competencies in global economics in the churches. The aim of the GEM school is to build economic literacy within churches by equipping participants with the tools and language to effectively advocate for urgent transformation in the global financial and economic realm. The primary objective of the GEM school is to develop economic empowerment for transformation within the ecumenical movement.
84. The School is held with the following objectives in mind:
- a. To identify theological starting points for economic justice and to understand the nature and logic of the relationship between theology, ethics and economics.
 - b. To provide a basic understanding of mainstream economic thinking
 - c. To identify, relativize and contextualize methodologies and normative fundamentals of economics.
 - d. Widen the horizon of economics by introducing ecological, feminist and other pluralistic approaches.
85. The second GEM school was held in Lusaka, Zambia between the 21 August and 1 September bringing together 15 participants for a ten-day programme. I attended along with Rev. Dora Arce-Valentin.

Coordination of Regional Activities

86. As part of the ongoing process of NIFEA the WCRC is committed to strengthening the work in the regions around economic and financial architecture. To this end the WCRC supported a process on Ethics, Economics and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean along with the regional ecumenical centre (CREAS)¹.

¹ CREAS is a multidisciplinary ecumenical organization of Christian professionals whose mission is to strengthen the capacity of the ecumenical movement, churches and social organizations in the promotion of human, civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. It contributes to the scope of this mission through collaborative actions, capacity development and knowledge production to generate and sustain processes of change in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Second Ethics and Economy Dialogue

87. CREAS, in partnership with the Secretariat for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Social Pastoral – Caritas (SELACC), the Department of Justice and the Solidarity of the Latin American Episcopal Advisory Board (DEJUSOL- CELAM) the International Program on Democracy, Society and New Economics of the University of Buenos Aires (PIDESONE – UBA/Seube) and World Network of Ethics (Globethics) organized a high level dialogue in preparation for advocacy leading up to and during the G20 meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2018. The goal of the consultation was to contribute to the multidisciplinary, ethical-economic reflection from a human rights perspective with the presence and active leadership of AIPRAL.
88. The objectives of the consultation were to:
- Create spaces for inter-institutional and inter-disciplinary reflection and analysis.
 - To promote inter-institutional dialogue among organizations, academia, social and religious leaders with public bodies and governments at the national, regional and international levels within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and the road to the G20 meeting in Argentina in 2018
 - Form a group of experts in Latin America and the Caribbean who will provide advice and recommendations to the different social and religious leaders from human rights based perspective.

Buenos Aires Meeting

89. The second Ethics and Economy Dialogue was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina between the 2-3 November. The consultation was held to debate the three core topics that are at the centre of the G20 meeting: sustainable finances, dignified labour and inclusive development. Along me with, attending were Dora Arce-Valentin and Rev. Carola Tron Urban, president of the Waldensian Evangelical Church of the River Plate and former Executive Committee Member.

NIFEA Core Committee Meeting

90. In preparation for the meeting of the Global Ecumenical Panel on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture which was to be held in New York on 21-22 April 2018 an ad hoc panel was put into place.
91. The Objective of the Ad Hoc Panel were:
- To evaluate the NIFEA process and specific programmes
 - To prepare directions and perspectives that should be pursued at New York
 - To discern programmatic directions for the WCRC NIFEA work which may also inform the Strategic Planning Process of the WCRC
92. The Proposed Outcomes were:
- A clear direction for the WCRC work
 - A NIFEA working document in preparation for New York and beyond. It is envisaged that this document will both evaluate the NIFEA process so far as well as propose future programmatic directions.

93. The meeting met in Hannover on 2-3 April 2018 and brought together five persons (one absentee due to illness) to discuss and deliberate NIFEA process and enable the WCRC to strategically plan for the NIFEA Panel meeting to be held in New York as well as to incorporate these insights into WCRC's own strategic planning process.

The 3rd Meeting of the NIFEA Panel

94. The 3rd meeting of the Ecumenical Panel on a NIFEA took place in New York to connect with the United Nations 3rd Economic and Social Council Forum on Financing for Development (FfD) which took place 23-26 April at the UN headquarters.

95. Following two meetings in August 2013 and January 2014, the Ecumenical Panel on a NIFEA produced the report titled, "Economy of Life for All Now: An Ecumenical Action Plan for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture." The NIFEA Plan maps out areas for advocacy and engagement by churches in the areas of financial sector regulation, public finance and debt, and global economic governance, with a view to transforming the international financial architecture by relinking finance to the real economy, countering greed and embedding economy in society and ecology.

96. Since it was drawn up in January 2014, there have been significant and interconnected developments in global economic, political, social and ecological landscapes that bear on the NIFEA Plan. The NIFEA Ecumenical Panel met with the following objectives:

97. To analyse the signs of the times for the economy and the earth
 98. To identify emerging and persisting elements of economic and climate injustice and the key issues ahead
 99. To set up a process to update the NIFEA Plan, especially the priority actions, in light of the above and our findings so far
 100. To strategise new actions and partnerships as we advocate the analysis and transformation of NIFEA

101. In addition to the NIFEA panel members also present were the general secretaries of the WCRC, CWM and LWF. As the general secretary of the WCC was unable to be present due to personal reasons he sent his representative. Also present were representatives from the Roman Catholic Church and non-governmental agencies and social movements. The meeting produced future directions and programmatic trajectories. It also discussed and came to agreements on the following:

- a. The importance of creating a culture of accountability, putting financial observatories in place, and developing new, just financial structures
- b. Forgiveness as the starting point to pave the way for reconciliation, restitution and recovery
- c. Strengthening the coalitions of different movements (economical, ecological, social) and not compartmentalizing them; linking poverty, ecology, and inequality as a single issue
- d. Encouraging governments to invest in ecological advancements
- e. Mobilizing by informing communities, bringing shocking data to the fore to stir people into action
- f. Working on taxation issues at the national and global level; joining with other civil society groups like Oxfam

- g. Changing the narrative by working together with the sciences and other faiths, with a sense of humility and openness, and joining forces with particular social movements which are our allies
- h. Changing our own lifestyles by examining gender justice and ecological living within the Church
- i. Continuing to rally against things that obscure the Gospel

Theology

102. The theology work of the WCRC during the Bridge Plan was mainly determined by the preparation of the Strategic Plan. The General Council yielded a new framework for the programme work of the WCRC. The desks of Communion and Theology and of Justice and Witness should cooperate and develop an integrated approach that will express the cross-sectionality of the WCRC's vision as it is expressed in the tag line "called to communion, committed to justice": According to the biblical witness, justice is an integral expression of God's living presence in the creation. The justice work therefore cannot be reduced to an ethical addendum to a theological core. At the same time, theology cannot be pursued in an isolated sphere, but should be conducted in a way that it can lead the Communion to processes of confessing to address the present reality. In these processes, the theology work should draw from the Reformed tradition and contextual theologies.
103. The General Council Actions 20 and 21 defined the direction of this new approach:
- The theology work shall take up the "unfinished agenda" of the Reformation and lead to justice, peace, reconciliation, care and unity among Christians, people of different religions and the whole earth.
 - Theological engagement shall be based upon the sola scriptura principle and the confessions of Barmen, Belhar and Accra.
 - The theological work shall represent the diversity of the communion and shall be carried by the commitment to give voice to the faith experiences of people from all continents, giving preference to the voices of women and young people.
104. This new direction stimulated several highly productive conversations in the strategic planning process. In the draft of the strategic plan, you find an exploration of possible themes for theological engagement in the fields of "Identity, mission and purposes of the WCRC", "Learning from theologies that liberate and affirm life", "Embodied justice" and "Confronting rising authoritarianisms."
105. The extraordinary level of engagement and the quality that characterized these discussions bode well for the future of the theology work of the WCRC. The planned interaction between the different programme dimensions has the potential to open up a new horizon for theology work.

Mission

106. At the General Council, the Executive Committee engaged in a critical discussion on mission. At the day of the mission plenary, the business committee withdrew the mission proposal that was already published in the workbook and should be referred to the discernment process because some members criticised what they called a one-sided

emphasis on justice at the expense of an understanding of mission as evangelisation that aims at individual conversion.

107. The Conference on World Mission and Evangelism that was held in March in Arusha, Tanzania, had to deal with the same question. But unlike the proposal of the mission planning group at the General Council, the Arusha Conference did not take sides but tried to accommodate both perspectives by offering justice and evangelism the level of attention. The emphasis of the conference was directed to sharing and celebrating rather than on strategic direction. This decision allowed the conference to proceed with a high level of harmony.
108. Many Reformed participants of the conference cherished the sense of ecumenical unity that allowed many positive encounters, which would not have happened a few years ago. At the same time, there was also agreement that compiling different perspectives does not really engage with the challenges at hand.
109. In the strategic planning process, we therefore decided that the WCRC should make the clarifying of the foundation and goals of mission one of the central objectives of the work of the organisation in the coming six years. We hope that this process to a consolidated understanding of mission that will be supported by the whole communion.

Ecumenical Engagement

110. The ecumenical activities of the WCRC have continued the processes that had culminated at the Wittenberg day during the General Council.

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

111. In Wittenberg, the WCRC had associated with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). Lutherans and Catholics signed this document in 1999 and afterwards offered it to other Christian communions for association. The association of the World Communion was the conclusion of a discussion that lasted for more than 15 years. Several points had to be clarified before the association could take place:
- Associating is different from signing: If the WCRC had been asked to sign the JDDJ it would have been obliged to fully own a document that clearly speaks the languages of the Lutheran and the Catholic Church and does not acknowledge the Reformed tradition at all. Such a step would have been impossible for the WCRC. An association on the other hand allowed the Reformed to add their voice to the bilateral conversation about the understanding of justification between Lutherans, Catholics and Methodists who had already associated in 2006. This methodology made it possible to contribute a particular Reformed emphasis to the ecumenical discussion. The WCRC's statement of association therefore particularly stressed the link between justification and justice.
 - A communion is founded upon a deeper sense of unity than an alliance: Traditionally the WCRC and its predecessors had been reluctant to engage in doctrinal matters, because confession and doctrine were seen as the prerogative of the member churches. This approach began to change with the condemnation of apartheid as a heresy 1982 at the Ottawa General Council and finally with the adoption of the Accra

Confession in 2004. The WCRC understands itself more and more as a confessing communion that—after thorough consultation with the member churches—can engage with other Christian communions also in matters that touch the area of confessions and doctrine. Member churches are invited to adopt these decisions, but they are not obliged to do so. This procedure was applied in the process of drafting of the statement of association to the JDDJ: The Executive Committee adopted the statement of association after an intensive process of consultation of the member churches and the association was celebrated in Wittenberg during the General Council. In the meantime, one of the churches that was quite critical about the association has started its own dialogue process with the Catholic Church based on the JDDJ. This a good example for our Communion at work!

112. After the General Council, the Anglican Communion has celebrated its decision to welcome and approve the substance of the JDDJ in an ecumenical ceremony at Reformation Day 2017 in Westminster Cathedral.
113. This vibrant ecumenical activity has led to the revival of the proposal to use this momentum to develop the JDDJ format into a multilateral ecumenical forum. The five communions are currently defining the terms of reference of this process. First results shall be presented at a conference in March 2019 at Notre Dame University in the United States.
114. The draft strategic plan welcomes these developments wholeheartedly because they converge with the WCRC's conviction that in the future ecumenical relationships between Christian world communions should be discussed in a multilateral format and should find expression in acts of common witness.

The Wittenberg Witness

115. The Wittenberg Witness that was celebrated during the General Council is a prominent example for this emphasis on joint witness. The witness was based on a dialogue report that stated that there are no theological obstacles that would prevent communion between Lutherans and Reformed. The Wittenberg Witness was a first step to live out this theological unity. Both communions are committed to explore steps that would allow them to move more closely together.

Dialogue with the Mennonite World Conference

116. During the Wittenberg day, the Mennonite World Conference had invited the WCRC for a dialogue process. In the meantime, preliminary talks have begun to frame the project in more detail. It was agreed that the dialogue should lead to an act of reconciliation that should address the history of 500 years of conflict where Mennonites were victims of persecution by other Christian churches including the Reformed. A first important step on this way will be the Executive Committee meeting 2019 in Zürich, Switzerland, where Mennonites and Reformed will visit the locations of the first persecutions and start a process of "right remembering" that will allow them to tell their difficult history together in a way that does justice to the sentiments of both sides. This emerging reconciliation shall be lived out in steps of common witness conducted jointly by the two communions.

The International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue

117. The current phase of the Reformed-Anglican dialogue focuses on the understanding of communion and takes up the challenges that both communions currently experience. The Anglican Communion is challenged by tensions about human sexuality that have the potential to threaten the unity of the Communion. The WCRC has its own experiences with topics that challenge the cohesion of the Communion. In response to these developments the dialogue attempts to develop the understanding of communion by exploring ways on which diversity can be lived out and conflicts be conducted in a way that differences will not be church dividing. In September 2017, the dialogue group met in Durban, South Africa. In this year, the IRAD will convene in Vancouver, Canada. The dialogue will conclude in 2019.

Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue

118. The Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue will also present its report in 2019. In December 2017, the group met in Sydney, Australia. In December 2018, the dialogue will convene in Accra, Ghana. The theme of this dialogue is mission.

Reception of the Catholic-Reformed Dialogue report "Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice"

119. At this point, the WCRC does not have an adopted procedure to receive the reports of ecumenical dialogues. In the past, it had been criticized that the members of the Executive Committee had been asked to receive reports without the opportunity to engage properly with the documents.

120. For the reception of the Catholic-Reformed Dialogue report, I therefore want to suggest the following procedure: I propose to refer the dialogue report to the executive staff to prepare an extensive recommendation that we will discuss during the 2019 Executive Committee meeting in Zürich. Based on this recommendation the Executive Committee will be able to take an informed decision to receive the report.

The Third Gathering of the Global Christian Forum in Bogota, Colombia

121. The Global Christian Forum (GCF) attempts to convene all the different streams of world Christianity. Besides the churches and communions that are members of the WCC, the GCF gathers also Roman Catholics, Evangelicals and Pentecostals. The WCRC attended the 2018 gathering with a delegation of four people. As at the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha it was also possible to bring together the members of other Reformed delegations.

122. Like the Arusha meeting, the GCF gathering was characterized by great harmony. Members of different Christian groups that a few years ago would not have looked into each other's eyes engaged in processes of profound sharing. We were positively surprised that in Bogota, many delegates explicitly embraced diversity, called for gender balance and youth representation and emphasized the significance of justice. However, like in Tanzania, this rhetoric did not go very deep and was not applied to engage with problematic understandings of mission. Several delegates openly called for crusades and promoted an understanding of mission that strives for numbers without respect of the cultural and religious integrity of those to whom the Gospel is proclaimed.

123. Taking note of these discussions, the harmony and the fellowship appear quite problematic. The impressive outreach of the meetings in Arusha and in Bogota could only be achieved because they did not allow a critical discussion. From a Reformed perspective, the price of such unity appears to be quite high. It is problematic that both meetings did not offer the space engage seriously with the understanding of mission and of Christian unity from a justice perspective. The WCRC delegates to the two meetings therefore agreed that the Reformed have a calling in these two bodies. Without the contributions from the WCRC and its allies in the CWM and the WSCF several important discussions will not take place.

Communications

124. Over the past two years the work of the office of communications has focused on utilizing the General Council to expand the scope of communications for the WCRC. An event of this size and importance naturally brings increased attention and interest not only to the Council itself but also to the WCRC. Thus, besides the Council-specific work that was engaged in, there was always this secondary objective, and the post-Council work has focused on consolidating the gains made leading up to and through the Council.

125. Social media has been a special focus of the office for the last several years. The boost given by the General Council has continued, as those “liking” or “following” the WCRC Facebook page has grown 65% from March 2016 to March 2018 while the weekly average “reach” has grown 248% and those “engaged” by 385%. The substantial growth in the “reach” and “engagement” over the “likes/follows” indicates that those interested in the WCRC are even more committed than previously, as they interact with the posts, whether through comments, reacting or sharing.

126. In addition to the main WCRC Facebook page (which is primarily English), a Council-specific page in German was utilized for the Council, and a French-language CMER page was launched. Pages for the GIT and Theology office are also maintained.

127. Twitter, which is multi-lingual, has seen slower growth, but an ongoing usage of it, especially sharing and liking posts from members and partners has seen an increase in interactions and engagement. Both Twitter and Facebook are posted to at least daily (except on the weekends).

128. The WCRC’s Instagram account was used during the Council was has not been utilized since this. Ways in which to use it effectively use are currently being mulled. Similarly, the WCRC’s YouTube channel, effectively launched during the Council, is awaiting proper engagement. It is currently being reworked to better display the videos it currently has even as plans to ensure a steady stream of content are developed.

129. The monthly WCRC eNewsletter has also increased its reach significantly, purposefully adding the Council attendees to the list. The eNewsletter features articles posted to the WCRC website from the previous month; the website itself is maintained in eight languages (Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, English, French, German, Korean, Mandarin and Spanish). A redesign of the website is planned to begin later this year, based on the new strategic plan.

130. *Reformed Communiqué*, the WCRC's thrice-yearly print newsletter, contains the best articles posted to the website in each edition, along with an original message from the general secretary and several pieces about member churches. The *Communiqué* contains articles in the eight languages of the website, and its circulation has also increased post-Council. A special Council-only issue was printed and distributed to attendees at the close of the meeting. To mark the start of a new phase in the life of the WCRC, the *Communiqué* was given a design refresh for its first 2018 issue.
131. *Reformed World*, the WCRC's theological journal, is a joint effort between the offices of theology and communication, with the latter handling the production and distribution of the publication. Two special issues featuring content from the General Council were produced last fall with a third, featuring essays from the Global Institute of Theology, is nearing completion.
132. The English Minutes for the General Council were completed and posted to the website in March. Both the English Minutes and those of the other three constitutional languages (French, German and Spanish) are online and will be distributed in print to member churches in May. This process has taken longer than anticipated.
133. The communications office is also engaged in oversight of the database. The Council was of great help in bringing in new and updated information. However, the ongoing challenge is to keep this information up-to-date. Processes to do so are still being refined (as data can come in a variety of ways), but an important step was taken in training administrative staff to assist in this upkeep, as well as being able to use the data. Several projects are also planned for later this year to expand the use of the database.

Finance

Year-end closing 2017

134. The budget year 2017 was closed with a considerable surplus of 136,612.56 EUR. This surplus was achieved in spite of considerable unrealized currency losses:
- a. As an organization working globally and thus handling different currencies on several currency accounts, the WCRC is subject to risks resulting in currency fluctuations.
 - b. Given that it is not possible to plan currency fluctuations, an earmarked fund for currency losses in the amount of 100,000.00 EUR was created in the budget year 2016.
135. Contrary to previous years, in 2017 our accounts only showed a total of 36,759,18 EUR in FX gains while the FX losses amounted to 118,533.00 EUR, resulting in a total of 81,773.82 EUR in unrealized currency loss.
136. Given the significant surplus in the ordinary budget, we were able to maintain a balanced budget while keeping the earmarked fund for FX losses at 100,000.00 EUR. The surplus in the ordinary budget is a direct result of the allocation of salaries to the General Council budget. Staff costs were thus reduced by a total of 156,679.00 EUR, thus not only balancing the ordinary budget but achieving a significant surplus.

137. The ordinary budget was balanced by allocating the surplus to the general reserve fund that, as a result, was increased from 345,766.06 EUR at the end of the budget year 2016 to 409,467.14 EUR. Compared to the previous budget year, our assets have decreased by roughly 6% to a total of 3,994,134.27 EUR.

Audit 2017

138. The finance office is happy to report that we received a very positive report from the EKD high audit office. The high audit office reports no objections against the approval and authorization of the annual accounts by the executive committee.

Budget Plan 2018

139. After much hard work and special fundraising efforts, especially due to high pension contributions, a balanced budget has been drafted. Contrary to previous years, it only budgets for the allocation of a minimal expected surplus to the general reserve fund. The budget plan is to be approved by the Executive Committee during the meeting in Seoul.

Outstanding donations 2017

140. We would like to mention three considerable donations for programme work:
141. Council for World Mission (CWM): 83,584.09 EUR as support for the Justice and Witness Desk.
142. *Evangelisches Missionswerk* (EMW): 180,000.00 EUR as support for our missionary activities. This was increased to 200,000.00 EUR in the budget year 2018.
143. *Otto per Mille* (OPM): These are funds from the Waldensian Church. We received 175,000.00 EUR in our budget year 2017.
- a. Our budget year and OPM's budget year do not coincide. We receive yearly installments of 350,000.00 EUR in support of several programmes.
- b. 350,000.00 EUR have been received in the budget year 2018.

Membership Contributions

144. Items to note regarding membership contributions are:
- a. 5 % of all European membership contributions were allocated to WCRC Europe.
- b. 7.5 % of all membership contributions were allocated to a newly-created General Council Fund for 2024.
- c. Development of membership contributions in EUR:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Budget Plan 2018
Africa	49,292	35,393	15,313	47,787	20,424	20,000
Latin America	4,784	8,488	4,149	5,521	8,441	6,000
CANAAC	228,394	230,028	275,951	265,268	290,047	255,000
Asia	60,770	53,901	59,909	56,378	68,230	65,000
Pacific	12,054	4,720	3,714	3,844	2,847	3,500
Europe	510,646	467,644	473,013	401,522	396,492	420,000
TOTAL	865,940	800,174	832,049	780,320	786,481	769,500

- d. There was a considerable increase in contributions from CANAAC and Asia, and a smaller increase from Latin America.
- e. The contributions from CANAAC and Asia were at their highest since at least 2013, contributions from Latin America were significantly higher than most years.
- f. There was a considerable decrease in membership contributions from Africa. Contributions from this region were relatively high in 2013, 2014 and 2016 as several churches paid their arrears.
- g. There was a small decrease in membership contributions from Europe compared to the budget year 2016. The decrease, however, is considerable compared to previous budget year and clearly shows a downward trend.
- h. Within the frame of the General Council, intense conversations took place with many members about the payment of membership dues, the data available in our database was revised and updated to achieve an improved communication with our members.
- i. A decision by the executive committee on how to handle member churches that have been in arrears for several consecutive years needs to be made.

General Council

145. We offer some key aspects from a financial perspective:
- a. A budget separate from the ordinary budget was created for accounting purposes. This budget was set up as an investment budget, i.e. encompasses several accounting years.
 - b. The actual expenses incurred in the frame of the General Council were 3,516,446.69 EUR, and thus significantly lower than what had been anticipated at the time the first budget plan draft was made and submitted to our main donors, such as the UEK (Union of Evangelical Churches, Germany) and EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany), with 3,825,940.00 EUR.
 - c. As per donor requirements, the complete General Council reserve was used in the budget.
 - d. Most General Council projects incurred less expenses than expected as per budget plan.
 - e. This is mainly due to the need to draw up the initial budget plan very early on, when information on actual expenses was not yet available, as well as due to the fact that the number of General Council participants, especially those from the Global South that we received subsidies for, was considerably lower than expected.
 - f. As most subsidies were given based on a percentage of actual costs or to cover the difference between our funds and actual expenses, we expect donors such as the EKD, UEK, Bread for the World and German ministries to reclaim a significant amount of funds. A number of reclaimed funds provisions have thus been created in the total amount of 335,142.81 EUR.
 - g. Nevertheless, we intend to submit a revised financial plan to enter into negotiations with these donors.
 - h. A surplus of 69,245.97 EUR was achieved and allocated to a provision for miscellaneous General Council-related costs, such as unexpected reclaimed funds.
 - i. While most GC project have been audited, some audits are still ongoing and we are awaiting the result of internal audits and revisions carried out by donors after receiving our audited reports.

Reformed Partnership Fund and *Otto per Mille*

146. The Reformed Partnership Fund (RPF) is the projects development fund of the WCRC. The Partnership Fund is an important aspect of the commitment of the WCRC to mission. It is rooted in the understanding of the Communion as a family of interdependent churches: “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).
147. Its name reflects the ecumenical principle of resource-sharing: “working towards self-reliance and self- determination; committing ourselves to a common discipline of sharing among God’s people; participating in the decision-making process between north and south; and promoting through words and deeds the holistic mission of the church.” It is a people-centred fund, giving preference to human resource development. Grants are awarded to projects supported by WCRC member churches.
148. The Partnership Fund was created at the 22nd General Council (Seoul 1989). In 1990, after the collapse of communism throughout central and eastern Europe, the Executive Committee launched a separate fund to help churches in that region strengthen and rebuild their life. In 1997, the Debrecen General Council approved the merger of the two funds, so that the RPF now serves the four-fifths of our churches that are located in the southern hemisphere and in central, eastern and southern Europe. Applications have to comply with certain criteria, and be approved by the RPF subcommittee or, in its absence, an interim decision body. The maximum amount payable is 25,000 euro and 7,500 euro for emergency projects.
149. In early 2017 the WCRC’s main donors agreed to a moratorium in the project work of the RPF during the General Council. This was motivated by the temporarily redirecting every available resource to the organization of the event.
150. In relation with the donor *Brot für die Welt* (BfdW) and in parallel to the Council the continuation contract with BfdW expired and a new one was signed. Because of the moratorium and the actual dates under the expiring contract no new projects could be initiated until its formal closing. This resulted in a substantial balance to be decided upon, and paying back unexpended funds is likely. The next contract could not be initiated due to the same reasons. Ending contracts and the beginning ones usually have an overlap of one year.
151. With *Otto per Mille* (OPM) from the Waldensian Church, the programme work continued mainly with programme activities such as Global Peace Initiatives, NIFEA, Korea peace and reconciliation process and ecumenical peace initiatives, and RPF emergency support to Mexico and Cuba. At the end of the year the WCRC still maintained a substantial positive balance.
152. With the donations of the *Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen* the WCRC supported three projects of a different, more theological nature. At the end of the year the WCRC still also maintained a positive balance with this donor.

Conclusion

153. Special thanks to the vision and leadership of President Najla Kassab who inspires and builds relations of trust and vision. To the officers for their dedication and leadership. To those significant partners, EMW, *Brot für die Welt*, *Otto per Mille*, the Church of Westphalia, the Evangelical Reformed Church, the EKD, the Council for World Mission and many other partners. Again to the staff. To this Executive Committee, for your efforts, support and prayers. To the member churches for vision and ministry. To all we generously offer our support and prayer.
154. “By God’s mercy we have this ministry and we are not discouraged.”

Appendix 1: General Council Participation Numbers

Figures:

	Leipzig	<i>Grand Rapids</i>
Member churches:	136 churches (of 230)	183
Delegates:	386 (48% women)	
Africa:	125 44% women	43 churches (of 69) <i>51 churches</i>
Asia:	113 43% women	38 churches (of 61) <i>46 churches</i>
Caribbean:	9 89% women	4 churches (of 9) <i>8 churches</i>
Europe:	62 52% women	25 churches (of 40) <i>37 churches</i>
Latin America:	29 45% women	11 churches (of 20) <i>14 churches</i>
Middle East:	6 33% women	4 churches (of 4) <i>4 churches</i>
North America:	31 55% women	7 churches (of 13) <i>12 churches</i>
Pacific:	11 46% women	4 churches (of 14) <i>11 churches</i>
Ecumenical delegates:	20	
Observers:	10	
Guests:	9	
Speakers:	14	
WCRC Staff:	17	
Staff and Consultants:	165	
Stewards:	67	
GIT Staff and Faculty:	12	
GIT Students:	39	

Appendix 2: General Council Finances

Finances:

Income: 3.516.446,69 Euro

Registration etc.	183.484,89 euro
Member churches	164.171,29 euro
WCRC GC Reserve	579.012,70 euro
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>926.668,88 euro</i>
Grants German churches etc.	2.163.900,00 euro
Grants European churches etc.	71.088,69 euro
Grants Global institutions	20.000,00 euro
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>2.254.988,69 euro</i>
Grants German Government	434.050,00 euro
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>434.050,00 euro</i>
[Some grants will have to be partially repaid]	

Expenditure: 3.516.446,69 euro

Personnel	376.679,00 euro
GC Planning	82.860,94 euro
Subsidies (travel&accom.)	541.254,41 Euro
Pre-Councils	13.969,76 euro
Leipzig Event	1.277.174,70 euro
Berlin Visit	89.605,89 euro
Wittenberg	45.868,00 euro
Communication	292.746,76 euro
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>2.720.159,46 euro</i>
GIT	545.686,53 euro
Youth Gathering	110.926,26 euro
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>656.612,79 euro</i>
Art&Culture	139.674,44 euro
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>139.674,44 euro</i>