

Reformed communiqué

Articles in Bahasa Indonesia, Deutsch, English, Español, Français

Le Comité exécutif détermine la voie à suivre pour la CMER

Le Comité exécutif a orienté le travail de la Communion mondiale d'Eglises réformées (CMER) vers sa prochaine Assemblée Générale en 2025, lors de sa réunion annuelle, qui s'est tenue du 17 au 20 mai 2022.

« Nous nous sommes réunis en tant que Comité exécutif non pas pour réagir simplement à des rapports, ou pour prendre des décisions, mais pour répondre à la question de savoir ce que le Seigneur exige de nous alors que nous nous réunissons en tant que Communion », a déclaré la présidente Najla Kassab dans son allocution à la réunion, qui s'est à nouveau tenue de façon virtuelle.

Travail Programmatique

Dans son rapport au Comité exécutif, le Groupe de planification stratégique (SPPG), représenté par Rathnakara Sadananda, a noté le succès du processus de discernement « COVID et au-delà », qui s'est tenu virtuellement de décembre 2020 à novembre 2021, et se réjouit de poursuivre le travail sur de nombreuses questions soulevées dans ce cadre.

« Le SPPG observe que la Communion a compris au cours du processus « COVID et au-delà » ce qu'il est possible de faire en impliquant des personnes du monde entier dans le travail de discernement. D'une certaine manière, la Communion est plus connectée et plus active que jamais », indique le rapport du SPPG.



// Le comité exécutif de la CMER s'est réuni virtuellement. //

Le SPPG a également salué le lancement imminent du projet GRAPE (Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement), avec le soutien de Brot für die Welt et d'Evangelische Mission Weltweit, ainsi que la création prochaine d'un bureau à Rome, en collaboration avec l'Eglise vaudoise et l'Eglise d'Ecosse.

« La force de la Communion mondiale ne dépend pas uniquement du Bureau international, bien que le personnel soit compétent et entièrement dévoué au travail de la Communion », a noté Najla Kassab. « La coopération entre le Bureau et les régions est au cœur d'une Communion saine et bénie. »

Leadership

Le Comité exécutif a approuvé le maintien du Secrétariat général collégial (SGC) comme modèle de

direction jusqu'à ce qu'un secrétaire général soit élu et installé dans ses fonctions. Le SCG est composé des trois responsables de la CMER, qui travaillent collectivement pour remplir les obligations constitutionnelles du secrétariat général et assurer la direction de la Communion.

Le Comité exécutif a également approuvé un second mandat de cinq ans à partir de janvier 2023 pour Hanns Lessing, responsable des questions de communion et de théologie, et Philip Vinod Peacock, responsable des questions de justice et de témoignage. Le Comité exécutif a également exprimé son appréciation pour ces deux personnes ainsi que pour Phil Tanis (déjà dans son second mandat), responsable de la communication et des opérations.

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Conference to look at online educational experiences

Le comité de recherche du nouveau secrétaire général a indiqué qu'il avait deux candidats qu'il était prêt à interviewer en temps voulu. Le processus a été mis en attente jusqu'à ce que les fonds nécessaires puissent être garantis pour soutenir un secrétaire général pendant un mandat complet de sept ans.

Afin de garantir ce financement, l'exécutif a créé un comité chargé de présenter des propositions à la réunion de 2023 qui permettraient d'élire un secrétaire général et de garantir une capacité suffisante en termes de personnel. Ce comité se concentrera sur les besoins de viabilité à court et moyen terme et explorera des modèles de travail plus flexibles.

Viabilité

Dans son rapport financier à l'exécutif, le trésorier général Johann Weusmann a déclaré que si l'organisation a de nouveau réalisé un excédent pour l'exercice budgétaire 2021, il existe des risques importants pour les années à venir. Il s'agit notamment de l'inflation croissante et de la baisse des paiements de cotisations par les églises membres. Weusmann a noté que plus de 70% des églises membres n'ont pas payé leurs cotisations en 2021.

«Aujourd'hui, nous sommes appelés à tenir bon et à garantir les ressources financières, la stabilité et la viabilité au milieu des défis financiers qui menacent tout le travail œcuménique», a déclaré Kassab.

«Alors que les fonds pour les programmes sont généralement assurés sans problème, nous sommes mis au défi d'amener la CMER à un niveau de viabilité qui permette la poursuite de ses activités», a-t-elle ajouté. "Bien que nous comprenions que la viabilité n'est pas définie étroitement en termes financiers comme le soutient notre plan stratégique, ... la façon dont nous allons assurer la viabilité du travail de la Communion est un défi sérieux pour nous tous. La viabilité demeure une expression de l'engagement, des relations, de l'appropriation et de la communion approfondie. La viabilité est au cœur du renforcement de la communion en tant qu'objectif.»

A “Theological Education: Pandemic and Pedagogy” conference will convene from 5-7 December at the Trinity Theological Seminary, in Accra, Ghana. The hybrid conference is being organized by the Evangelische Mission Weltweit, Lutheran World Federation, World Communion of Reformed Churches, and World Council of Churches.

As COVID-19 restrictions challenged most institutions with a choice to go online or close their doors indefinitely, many theological institutions around the world were either pedagogically unprepared or lacked infrastructure for online learning. Some adapted well to the online format, but for many the lack of residential fees and ancillary institutional support exacerbated the existing crisis of sustainability.

Even as acute restrictions of the pandemic ease, theological education will not return to the situation as it was before COVID-19. While new threats to educational equity and theological discourse must be addressed, the conference will also celebrate the ways that increased connectivity can provide new opportunities for decolonizing learning and transformative pedagogies.

Participants will take stock of online education experiences and explore the threats and opportunities that have surfaced in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This hybrid conference for theological educators will explore:

- educational methods related to pandemic traumata
 - impact of stress/isolation on the quality of life and learning for staff and students
 - providing curricular spaces for sharing the strains and strategies for healing and resilience
- how networks of theological institutions and ecumenical cooperation can shape the content and methods of theological discourse in digital space
 - possibilities for new forms of online ecumenism that include digital pilgrimages, and webinars that broaden the experience of global fellowship and spirituality
 - reconceptualizing the scope, reach and aims of formal and informal theological education as a question of equity
- pedagogical promise in the wake of the pandemic
 - networking for online access to teaching material and new ways to share resources for educational support
 - new avenues for transformative pedagogies and methods of decolonizing digital based theological education
 - case studies of online pedagogical lessons learned by those who previously hosted online teaching and those who transitioned to online theological education

Online sessions will be hosted on Zoom. Transformative pedagogies may be incorporated into the online format, so that the methods of the conference communicate the content.

Perencanaan Sidang Raya 2025 Dilanjutkan

“**B**ertekunlah dalam kesaksianmu” telah disetujui sebagai tema Sidang Raya 2025 oleh Komite Eksekutif *World Communion of Reformed Churches* (WCRC) pada pertemuan tahunannya.

“Bertekunlah dalam kesaksianmu” adalah panggilan kenabian untuk Gereja,” demikian bunyi laporan Kelompok Tugas Sidang Raya. “Tema ini menawarkan dorongan semangat kepada gereja, sekaligus membangkitkan harapan untuk masa depan yang belum terwujud, di mana kasih dan keadilan akan menang bagi semua orang. Namun, tema ini juga memungkinkan kita untuk merangkul rasa sakit dan kehancuran posisi kita sebagai manusia. Pemikiran ini lebih lanjut mengacu pada ide Palestina tentang *somood* yang berbicara tentang tetap teguh di tengah-tengah cobaan.”

Beberapa bagian Alkitab dikutip sehubungan dengan tema tersebut, termasuk Ibrani 12:1, Yakobus 5:11, dan Lukas 21:19. Dalam mengadopsi tema tersebut, Komite Eksekutif mencatat, “Ini adalah panggilan untuk tidak berkecil hati, untuk bertahan di tengah banyak tuntutan realitas, untuk bersaksi dan untuk memosisikan diri di dasar yang kokoh dan stabil.”

Sidang Raya 2025 akan diadakan di Thailand, dengan Gereja Kristus di Thailand (*Church of Christ in Thailand/CCT*) sebagai tuan

» Nota
kesepahaman
tersebut meletakkan
dasar untuk Sidang
Raya 2025 «



// Para pemimpin dari WCRC dan Gereja Kristus di Thailand. //

rumah, didukung oleh gereja-gereja anggota di kawasan Asia. Segera setelah penutupan pertemuan Komite Eksekutif, Hanns Lessing dan Philip Vinod Peacock, dari Sekretariat Umum Kolegial WCRC, terbang ke Thailand untuk menandatangani nota kesepahaman dengan para pemimpin gereja di sana.

“Penandatanganan nota kesepahaman menandai momen penting dan langkah pertama dalam perencanaan Sidang Raya. Kami sangat senang bermitra dengan CCT untuk bekerja menuju Sidang Raya berikutnya,” kata Peacock.

Nota kesepahaman tersebut meletakkan dasar untuk Sidang Raya 2025, yang akan mencakup Institut Teologi Global sebelum persidangan serta pra-sidang untuk perempuan dan pemuda. Sebagai tuan rumah, CCT akan membentuk komite lokal untuk mengkoordinasikan banyak aspek persidangan termasuk acara dan program lokal. Lessing dan Peacock juga mengunjungi lokasi potensial untuk Sidang Raya, serta mendiskusikan tanggal kegiatan yang tepat dengan para pemimpin CCT.

Komite Eksekutif juga membentuk Komite Perencanaan Sidang Raya (*General Council Planning Committee/GCPC*) untuk melanjutkan pekerjaan mempersiapkan Sidang Raya berikutnya. Dario Barolin ditunjuk sebagai moderator komite, dengan keanggotaan dari seluruh Persekutuan.

GCPC akan bekerja sama dengan CCT dan gereja-gereja Asia lainnya untuk memastikan bahwa Sidang Raya ini berakar secara kontekstual. Tanggung jawab lain dari komite ini termasuk mengembangkan program dan jadwal yang terperinci, menunjuk komite ibadah dan kelompok kerja lain yang diperlukan, serta mengembangkan publikasi dan materi pendukung.

Disampaikan juga bahwa persidangan ini harus mempertimbangkan beberapa perayaan pada tahun 2025 yang mencakup peringatan 1700 tahun Konsili Ekumenis Nicea yang pertama, peringatan seratus tahun *United Church of Canada*—dan peringatan 150 tahun WCRC itu sendiri, yang didirikan pada tahun 1875 sebagai Aliansi Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Seluruh Dunia yang memegang Sistem Presbiterian.

Instalación del comité ejecutivo de la AIPRAL

En la Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana de Bogotá se realizó, en el marco del culto de la comunidad local, la instalación del nuevo Comité Ejecutivo de la Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina, que fue electo en la XIII Asamblea General de abril pasado. El directorio entrante se reunirá en el correr de la semana junto al directorio saliente para elaborar el plan de acción para el período 2022-2027 atendiendo a los lineamientos de la Asamblea. La comunidad local llevó el registro audiovisual del culto al que se puede acceder a través de sus redes sociales.

La Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia – Sínodo Reformado (IPC-SR) se incorporó a la Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina y fue bienvenida por las demás iglesias miembros durante la XIII Asamblea General de AIPRAL, desarrollada de forma virtual del 21 al 23 de abril de 2022. La Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana de Bogotá pertenece a la mencionada colectividad y en sus instalaciones, en el marco del servicio de adoración dominical, se realizó la instalación del nuevo Comité Ejecutivo de la Alianza por el período 2022-2027.



// Miembros del Comité Ejecutivo de la AIPRAL. //

El servicio estuvo a cargo del Pbro. Rev. Germán E. Suárez Nuñez de la IPC-SR quien dio la bienvenida a las hermanas y hermanos ecuménicos y dirigió la liturgia. El mensaje estuvo a cargo del Secretario saliente Rev. Darío Barolin, quien abordó el texto de Hechos 2:42 invitando a recordar y revitalizar las enseñanzas de los apóstoles, así como el valor de la konionia para Juan Calvino, como el compartir el sacramento de la Santa Cena pero también como servicio a la sociedad.

“No sorprende a nadie si digo que el cristianismo a nivel global está en crisis. Pero esta crisis es también una oportunidad para sacar a las iglesias de su estancamiento, como sucedió en la iglesia primitiva.(...) La oración es el lugar que abrimos en nuestras vidas para que Dios entre y así nos hacemos comunidad, y el milagro de Pentecostés nos invita a pensar las formas en que nos comunicamos y construimos comunidad, para recrearnos como iglesias vitales.” — Darío Barolin

Para la instalación, el Secretario Ejecutivo de la IPC-SR Rev. Eison Angulo realizó una breve introducción sobre la historia y cometidos de la Alianza y anunció el momento de

instalación del nuevo Comité. La misma fue oficiada por Presidente saliente Rev. Agnaldo Pereira Gomes quien agradeció el compromiso de las y los integrantes salientes y de quienes asumen la conducción de AIPRAL, quienes recibieron la imposición de manos por parte de toda la comunidad, resultando consagradas y consagrados a la misión ecuménica y reformada en el continente.

Por último, el Presidente entrante Rev. Wertson Brasil tomó la palabra, agradeciendo a la comunidad local por la acogida y pidiendo la colaboración y participación en la vida ecuménica que fortalece a la acción de AIPRAL en sus diferentes cometidos,

La Primera Iglesia Reformada de Bogotá recibe en sus oficinas durante el correr de esta semana a las reuniones de transición de Comité Ejecutivo. Nuestro agradecimiento a Dios que nos reúne en su nombre, a la IPC-SR y a la comunidad local que nos reciben en el amor cristiano que nos compromete como hermanas y hermanos, para ser voz profética y misionar en conjunto.

GEM School grounds economic justice biblically

In July, the first face-to-face GEM School held since 2019 was held in Berlin, Germany, with a focus on ecological and feminist economics.

The Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics, and Management for an Economy of Life—GEM School—is a program within the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) project.

NIFEA is a cooperative effort by the Council for World Mission (CWM), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), World Council of Churches (WCC), and World Methodist Council (WMC). It is supported by funding from *Otto per Mille*.

“The pandemic underlined yet again the need for a new economic and financial architecture that meets the needs of all people regardless of class, gender, or race and sustains the whole world of creation,” said Isabel Phiri, WCC Deputy General Secretary.

“In particular we are highlighting feminist economics and ecological economics as they are particularly

critical as we reflect on how to build a different financial and economic architecture,” said Athena Peralta, WCC Programme Executive for Economic and Ecological Justice.

The 30 participants from more than one dozen countries were ecumenical and church leaders, justice advocates, economic activists, ministers, and theological students.

“GEM School provides us with a concrete way to learn from each other together—theologians and lay, economic experts and social advocates, multi-generationally,” said Sivin Kit, LWF Program Executive for Public Theology & Interreligious Relations.

“The GEM School recognizes that our economics has to be contextual. A lot of our NIFEA work is rightly focused on providing a critique on our advocacy. We also need to see where these alternatives can take root and create change,” said Peter Cruchley, CWM Mission Secretary for Mission Development.

As part of its contextual focus, students visited the *Brot für die Welt*

offices in Berlin, as well as with two women’s advocacy organizations, Women in Exile & Friends and Respect Berlin.

“Social holiness and personal holiness have to come together, without neglecting the hard work in the political arena to effect economic and social change,” said Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, WMC Geneva Secretary.

Sessions included introductions to feminist economics; ecological economics, including de-growth and post-growth approaches; foundations for global financial and economic transformation; and advocacy tools for economic justice, using the Zacchaeus Tax Campaign as a case study.

Bible studies during the week focused on “Land, Labour, Capital, and Technology” and “New Creation and New Earth.”

“I am looking forward to absorbing as much as I can and then to apply it when I return home, along with building networks here to tap into to expand the work of God,” said student Westonio Sarien from Ebenezer Congregational Church in South Africa.



Reformed theologians reflect on WCC Assembly theme



In a theological reflection on the theme of the World Council of Churches (WCC) 11th Assembly, the World Communion of Churches (WCC) invites everyone to “Come, join the divine dance!”

The Assembly’s theme is “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” It was “directly inspired by 2 Corinthians 5:14 and draws on the very heart of the gospel that offers to the world the depths and wonder of the love of God the Holy Trinity. It is rooted in God’s design for the unity and reconciliation of all, a design made visible in the incarnation of the love of God in Jesus Christ,” states an introduction by the WCC.

“The reflection on the theme is intended to offer to our member churches and the global ecumenical movement a specifically Reformed theological reflection on the issues raised in the theme,” said Philip Vinod Peacock, WCC executive for witness and justice. “By this is specifically meant a reflection that emerges from the margins.”

The twenty theologians, church leaders, and activists gathered by the WCC reflected on the theme “as God’s invitation into a dance,” stating,

We sing in our languages, dance in our own ways, with the bodies we inhabit; we weave a tapestry of movement, of sound, of breathing. This is a dance that is worship with

all our hearts, minds, bodies, and vulnerability. It is God; Creator, Redeemer, and Reconciler who invites us into this dance with all of creation, where all are welcome, all can participate, and all do belong. This is the dance that creates a safe, joyful, and transformative space (chora). In using the metaphor of dancing we include all forms of movement including breathing, recognizing that for some physical movement may be a challenge. Nobody is left out of this dance.

The invitation to the dance comes with a caveat, however: “The choreography of the dance reflects the lived realities of God’s people: a world of violence, growing inequality and inequity, discrimination, racism—exacerbated by wars, the pandemic, renewed global tensions in a neo-Cold War order, and attempts to erode hard-won rights.”

Through several sections—Christology, Love, Reconciliation, Unity, and Movement—the reflection invites readers “to hear the voices of those in the margins, to respond with love, and to act towards reconciliation for unity in all our magnificent diversity.”

It concludes with a call to the churches that includes:

1. To be committed to transformative justice in every sense.

2. To be rooted in God’s love that is mediated to us in and through Christ.
3. To be and become Christ’s beloved community manifesting the gifts of reconciliation and unity which are obligations of God’s love.
4. To become a Gospel event through its witness to Christ who resides in the margins.
5. To be there where it belongs—dangerously with broken people and groaning creation, suffering the brutality of the authoritarian regimes and their funding corporations.

“The assembly affords an opportunity for the global church to come together and discern what direction the ecumenical movement should take,” said Peacock. Thus, the reflection is being made available to all WCC member churches, especially those sending delegations to the WCC Assembly, as well as the greater ecumenical movement.

The gathering was co-hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Korea and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and was held the last week of June in Seoul.

The WCC 11th Assembly will take place in Karlsruhe, Germany, 31 August to 8 September 2022.

Come join the circle

God calls us
To a new moment
To walk together with God's people
It is time to transform
Those things that don't work anymore
Alone and isolated
Nobody can do it
So come,
Come join the circle, you too!
You are very important

(*Um momento novo*,
Ernesto B. Cardoso)

This Brazilian song, which invites us to join hands like children do in an ever-widening circle dance, introduces us to the theme of the 11th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” Christ’s love is that which moves, which invites all of the world to join the circle dance to restore relations that are broken.

The Reformed family reflects on the theme as God’s invitation into a dance. As Christ’s love moves us, all of creation dances and rejoices, and all are invited (Psalm 148). We sing in our languages, dance in our own ways, with the bodies we inhabit; we weave a tapestry of movement, of sound, of breathing. This is a dance that is worship with all our hearts, minds, bodies, and vulnerability. It is God; Creator, Redeemer, and Reconciler who invites us into this dance with all of creation, where all are welcome, all can participate, and all do belong. This is the dance that creates a safe, joyful, and transformative space (*chora*). In using the metaphor of dancing we include all forms of movement including breathing, recognizing that for some physical movement may be a challenge. Nobody is left out of this dance.

God invites us to dance together as God’s people. However, we recognize

that sometimes the beat to which we dance is not set by God, but that we are swayed by empire. The Accra Confession says, “We recognize the enormity and complexity of the situation. We do not seek simple answers. As seekers of truth and justice and looking through the eyes of powerless and suffering people, we see that the current world (dis)order is rooted in an extremely complex and immoral economic system defended by empire” (Article 11).

The choreography of the dance reflects the lived realities of God’s people: a world of violence, growing inequality and inequity, discrimination, racism—exacerbated by wars, the pandemic, renewed global tensions in a neo-Cold War order, and attempts to erode hard-won rights.

Thinking about Christ’s love, reconciliation, and unity as a circle dance in which we hold each other’s hands, our movement is interdependent and interconnected as is the *oikos* all of God’s creation inhabits. Only in the consideration of multiplicity we avoid reducing the endless diversity to the idolatry of a single perspective, interpretation, normativity, or experience. The consequences of this idolatry are discrimination based on race, gender, religious beliefs, sexuality, ethnicity, and ability. This also exacerbates neo-colonialism, segregation, apartheid, xenophobia, loss of biodiversity, land grabbing, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, femicide, and genocide.

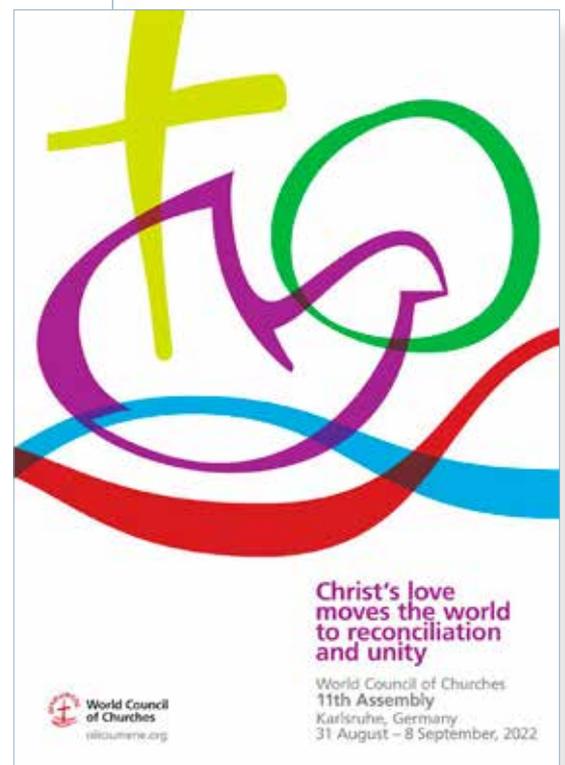
God incarnated in history, in creation, and God invites the church to participate in God’s mission across time and

contexts. Christ’s love, reconciliation, and unity can only be considered through the lens of intersectionality with justice.

This reflection invites you to join the dance with past and future generations. It invites you to hear the voices of those in the margins, to respond with love, and to act towards reconciliation for unity in all our magnificent diversity.

Christology

Historically, the Reformed church was the church of refugees or *ecclesia semper migranda*—the Church of the Wandering People of God. Jesus was also a wandering preacher, traveling in particular places which people consider margins of the society. Christ was actually always at the margin, “the end of the world,” where the oppressed, victimized, discriminated, and powerless are placed and abandoned, and Christ was inviting the church to come to find him.



The idea “Christ at the margin” radically challenges our conception of the church. Christ is out there at the margin with people whom we have been excluding from the church. Christ is calling us to come to the margin to restore God’s justice and work toward reconciliation. We Christians confess this Christ is our Lord. Our identity and practices are rooted in this confession. Therefore, Christ is the test of everything that claims itself to be Christian.

Christ, in and through his redemptive history with creation, is our window into the inner triune life of God. Incarnated God is concrete, personal, tangible, transformative—both to humans and the rest of the creation. Christ opens up a new vision of the divine, one that rebels against an understanding of God who remotely operates the world as its patriarchal father, master, and lord. God, as manifested in Christ, is the God who pours Godself into the human/creation as one of us and God with us, as a vulnerable God who weeps and laments with creation out of love.

The early Christian communities, as they sought to make sense of Christ for the world, insisted that his significance lies in the cross. For them the cross was the wisdom of God and the power of God. For them, Christian theology was a theology of the cross. They were aware of the scandalous nature of the cross, yet they insisted that therein lies a window into the life of God: God’s reconciling history with humanity/creation. Christ expresses identification with the suffering humanity in and through Christ’s passion.

As the collective human person, and God’s elect, Christ takes into the life of God the suffering of human communities. The Spirit in whose accompanying power the Son had endured the cross gathers the suffering humanity into the triune life

God. In this exchange, God identifies with the sufferers, and sufferers are taken into the triune life of God. Since Christ becomes one (at-one-ment) with the broken, it is these broken people that mediate the reconciliatory process by announcing that the kingdom is at hand, therefore repent. Thus, reconciliation happens when those who perpetuate violence turn towards the victims in repentance and seek pardon from the broken ones. And this is the good news for the Christians: Christ is the Good News of reconciliation. The Heidelberg Catechism says in Question and Answer 36, that Christ “is our mediator and, in God’s sight, he covers with his innocence and perfect holiness my sinfulness in which I was conceived.”

It is from the Christological perspective that we try to understand the concepts of love, reconciliation, and unity. We have seen misuses of these concepts in the history of church and theology, abuses of marginalized groups by people using the very terms that stand for the core of the Gospel. But with our understanding of Christ as God incarnate, crucified, and risen—incarnated into the flesh of creation and resurrected for the sake of all of creation—we reclaim these concepts as hopeful, life-giving, and subverting. We imagine our Christian discipleship and mission as a reconciling and ongoing engagement and process, not as a one time event to be finished.

Church as the Wandering People of God happens in preaching the Word, exposing violence, and finding identity in remembering the dangerous memory of the cross, thus affirming that re-membering of the body happens in our participation in the broken and fragmented lives. Church happens as the Wandering People of God join Christ in embodying Christ’s discriminatory and subversive love for

the “least of them,” as the church lets itself be moved by the transforming and life-giving Spirit of Christ, binding us not only to Christ but to one another and to all of creation. This Spirit that lifts up those who suffer and cry for justice is the very same Spirit who calls the perpetrators of injustice and violence to repent, to die to the power of evil, and to break the chains of injustice in order to live the new life of righteousness to which Christ has set us free. Church happens as the Church of the Wandering People join together in the unity of living, embodied costly solidarity, bound to Christ and to each other, continuously attempting to live the fierce love of Christ in courageous acts of reconciliation.

Love

Dance is a love language everyone speaks. The movement of our bodies, of our breath, celebrates love, life, and justice. In Palestine the dabka is a traditional dance that celebrates community. People join hands, but the circle remains open as an invitation for anyone to join. The beat of the dabka is a celebration of life and love: it defies oppression and is a sign of *summud* (resilience). Dancing the dabka challenges segregation, discrimination, structures of apartheid. Despite oppression, despite hardship, the dabka calls people to share each other’s burdens in costly solidarity.

Love, life, and justice are inseparable as God sent Jesus as the incarnation of God’s love: Jesus is God incarnate not only into the human flesh, but in all creation. This means that love is caring, intimate, and consensual. According to the Christian faith, God moves and is moved by love to create and to give life. All of life flows from the triune God’s love, a radical, holistic love.

God’s love is a radical love as was shown to us in the life and death of

Jesus “who came to serve, not to be served (Mark 10:45); who tears down the mighty and powerful and exalts the lowly (Luke 1:46-55); and whose love is characterized by mutuality, reciprocity, and interdependence. It therefore requires a commitment to struggle against and resist the powers that obstruct the fullness of life that God wills for all, and a willingness to work with all people involved in movements and initiatives committed to the causes of justice, dignity, and life” (Together Towards Life).

People with disabilities struggle for their dignity and lives to be acknowledged in church. They do not feel they belong in the church community because of the stigma associated of sin, punishment from God, and lack of faith, with disabilities. They are purposely excluded and othered. The radical love needs to be embodied in the real life experience in worship through the accessibility and accommodation for all abilities.

“God is love and whoever abides in love, abides in God, and God abides in them” (1 John 4: 16b). Love seeks justice and subverts the binaries that emphasize otherness, that set boundaries to God’s love, that perpetuate patterns of us and them, strangers and neighbours, normal and abnormal, and many, many more. God’s love is inexhaustible; it is contextual, interrelated, and interdependent. Living God’s radical love means embracing vulnerability as an increational reality of the church.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a major theme around which many contemporary Reformed confessions are constructed. Reconciliation is fundamentally about the restoring of just relationship—relationship that has been broken or has been damaged—

and it is therefore both a theological and a socio-political concept at the same time; the two cannot be separated.

On the cross, God reconciles all of creation with Godself. In Christ, we are reconciled to God and to one another and the whole of creation. Christ’s work of reconciliation models a way to reconcile humanity with humanity and humanity with the rest of creation through changing of human exploitation. It is important to recognize that in God’s act of reconciliation, it is God, as the wounded party, who not only initiates the process of reconciliation but sets out the terms of reconciliation. In the act of reconciling, God comes in the person of Jesus to live with, to listen to, and to be transformed by other victims.

Alongside the ministry of Jesus, Christ’s death and suffering are seen as the heart of reconciliation. Reconciliation can never be easy, but emerges out of and along with truth-telling, lamenting, the Korean concept of *Hway-Gae*, and action and involves the addressing of the underlying socio-political structures that have caused the breach of relationship. Reparatory justice is necessarily a part of reconciliation. Reparatory justice is a process to remember, repair, restore, rejoin, replenish, set right, make amends, and reconcile.

Truth-telling

Truth-telling is the intentional act of bearing witness to the vicissitudes of racism, sexism, and human specism. This involves both memory and the speaking of truth to power. Truth-telling allows for right remembering, including facilitating and encouraging more public awareness and civic engagement. In the telling and the listening of the stories of brokenness and pain we remember voices of the

victims of history and nature, and in doing so we seek to re-member broken community. Such telling of these memories serves as prophetic truth-telling to those in power who have an intentional forgetting and seek to suppress truth because it is to their disadvantage. And so the stories of the oppressed, the stories of comfort women, the stories of the transatlantic slave trade, the stories of Indigenous peoples must be told and have to be listened to. We are reminded that listening is an ethic and to the Christian it is holy.

Lamenting

Lament is a form of protest, calling on God’s saving presence. It is easily ignored and bypassed, through the cold reality of evil and injustice. It is a longing for God’s saving presence. Lamenting calls us not to move too quickly from the pain of Good Friday to the joy of Easter but to dwell in the liminal space and time of Holy Saturday, which is the holding of space for us to lament and to bear with a profound sense of loss. Lamenting is calling on God who has a strong solidarity with the broken creation to do justice and be faithful and to also call on people to do justice (Lamentations 1:12). What is needed is a mutual lamentation by both those who suffer pain and those who have caused the suffering. This requires a refusal to move quickly and a conscious decision to stay in sorrow, pain, and regret.

Hway-Gae (Metanoia)

In the process of *Hway-Gae*, the offender must bear and endure the tension of committing to a change of heart and a change in way of life. Forgiveness is not a destination and only follows a recognition, remorse, restitution, and remembrance. This calls for the summoning of the

ancestors, through sacred memory and truth-telling, into the act of dealing with the apology since they are our cloud of witnesses. While a repentant apology is a necessity for breaches to be repaired, it is the victims and not the offenders who set the terms of reconciliation, and it is the victims who will discern the genuineness and appropriateness of the apology produced.

Action

Truth-telling, lament, and *Hway-Gae* are incomplete unless they are met with concrete action. The interconnectedness allows for remembering that necessitates the dismantling of structures that created broken relationships. It requires concretely addressing the web of intersectional oppression of systemic issues. It means courageous intention to change both structures and people. It means the creation of brave spaces where these conversations can happen and the offering of resources that will right wrongs. These spaces are spaces of radical hospitality that reflect the triune God's perichoratic dance. Reconciliation must be reconcili-action.

Unity

In the midst of brokenness, unity provides sustainability and resilience. To acknowledge unity is also not to imply uniformity but to respect diversity and differences. Unity is both a gift and an obligation to sustain and nourish by sharing values. In this understanding of unity, we need to keep in mind the ambivalence; even within unity there are a lot of definitions of unity. For example, a South African expression, *Ubuntu*, means: "I am a person through other people. My humanity is tied to yours." Moreover, the Korean concept of *Sangsaeng*, as used by some Korean theologians, ascribes to a mutual life

or living together. While we are inspired by these concepts, we struggle to embrace the unity we are called to.

We acknowledge that in the broken world, unity has been misused to oppress. Those in the margins are co-opted into a unity that benefits only the privileged. Unity needs to be grounded in the experiences of those on the margins, otherwise unity leads to injustice. As recognized by the Belhar Confession,

...[U]nity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Ephesians 4:7-13; Galatians 3:27-28; James 2:1-13).

Unity consists of justice, equality, equity, dignity, and hospitality which should lead into the fullness of life to all. Unity enhances our ability to speak truth to power. We acknowledge the gift of United and Uniting churches and the quest of healing ecclesial divisions. However, it is not the only expression of unity. We appreciate the value amongst Indigenous peoples placed on harmony between human beings and creation. Unity is not limited to human relationships alone but also includes the entire creation.

As God invites us to dance together, in unity we can dance in harmony while we acknowledge the movement of all as the Belhar Confession affirms: "that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practice, and pursue community with one

another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another."

Movement

The theme "Christ's love moves us to reconciliation and unity" beckons us to respond to God's call to dance in different ways. God's inward and outward movements calls us to move. God moves us, and the groaning of creation moves God. God leads us in dance, through the brokenness of Good Friday, the trauma and grief of Holy Saturday, the joy and hope of the Easter resurrection, and the anticipation of the returning Christ.

If Christ's love moves, then we cannot remain static. It takes churches to prioritize the movement that we are, with less emphasis on the institutions and establishments that keep us in survival mode. The ecumenical movement is called upon to reaffirm its commitment to dance with Jesus and make a difference in our broken world. In this dance, we are called to move beyond seemingly benign interpretations of love, reconciliation, and unity which sometimes simply get adopted by powerful, oppressive forces.

In his life on earth, Jesus was not co-opted by powerful political or religious forces. To the contrary, the love of Jesus meant he suffered and died at the hands of those forces. This is what moves us. Following the Lord Jesus Christ's self-emptying love, we are called to dance with God to bring authentic reconciliation and unity to all of creation.

There is need for self-examination on the part of the church to discern its complicity in injustice, inauthentic forms of love, division, and disunity. Self-examination needs to move to repentance and *metanoia*.

Pillay zum neuen ÖRK Generalsekretär gewählt

We call the church to be courageous in love following God's *incretional* example of kenotic self-giving and to investigate (and interrogate) the boundaries set for belonging.

We call the church to embrace the logic of love that stems from the foolishness and the wisdom of the cross that challenges violent structures of oppression, segregation, and discrimination.

We understand this call to the churches includes

1. To be committed to transformative justice in every sense.
2. To be rooted in God's love that is mediated to us in and through Christ.
3. To be and become Christ's beloved community manifesting the gifts of reconciliation and unity which are obligations of God's love.
4. To become a Gospel event through its witness to Christ who resides in the margins.
5. To be there where it belongs—dangerously with broken people and groaning creation, suffering the brutality of the authoritarian regimes and their funding corporations.

This call embodies the affirmation that in our woundedness, we experience God's healing and mediate God's healing in response. Come, join the divine dance!

I danced on a Friday
When the sky turned black
It's hard to dance
With the devil on your back
They buried my body
And they thought I'd gone
But I am the dance
And I still go on

Dance then wherever you may be...
(June 2022, Seoul, Republic of Korea)

Jerry Pillay, ehemaliger Präsident der Weltgemeinschaft Reformierter Kirchen (WGRK), ist zum neuen Generalsekretär des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen (ÖRK) gewählt worden.

„Dies ist ein besonderer Tag, nicht nur für die reformierte Familie, sondern auch für die ökumenische Bewegung“, sagte WGRK-Präsidentin Najla Kassab. „Jerry wird dem ÖRK große Gaben bringen. Wir freuen uns auf die Zusammenarbeit und den weiteren Ausbau der Beziehungen zwischen dem ÖRK und der WGRK. Sein Glaube an die Einheit und sein Enthusiasmus für die Verbesserung der Beziehungen zwischen den Kirchen werden eine neue Inspiration für die ökumenische Bewegung sein.“

Er ist der neunte Generalsekretär in der Geschichte des ÖRK, der 1948 als Gemeinschaft von Kirchen gegründet wurde.

Derzeit ist Pillay Dekan der Fakultät für Theologie und Religion an der Universität Pretoria. Er ist Mitglied der Presbyterianischen Unionskirche im südlichen Afrika und stammt auch aus Südafrika.

Pillay war einer der beiden Kandidierenden für den höchsten Verwaltungsposten im ÖRK. Die zweite Kandidatin war Dr. Elizabeth Joy. Pillay wird den scheidenden geschäftsführenden Generalsekretär Priester Prof. Dr. Ioan Sauca ablösen, der die Stelle im April 2020 übernommen hatte, als der damalige Generalsekretär Pastor Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit zum Leitenden Bischof der Kirche von Norwegen ernannt worden war.

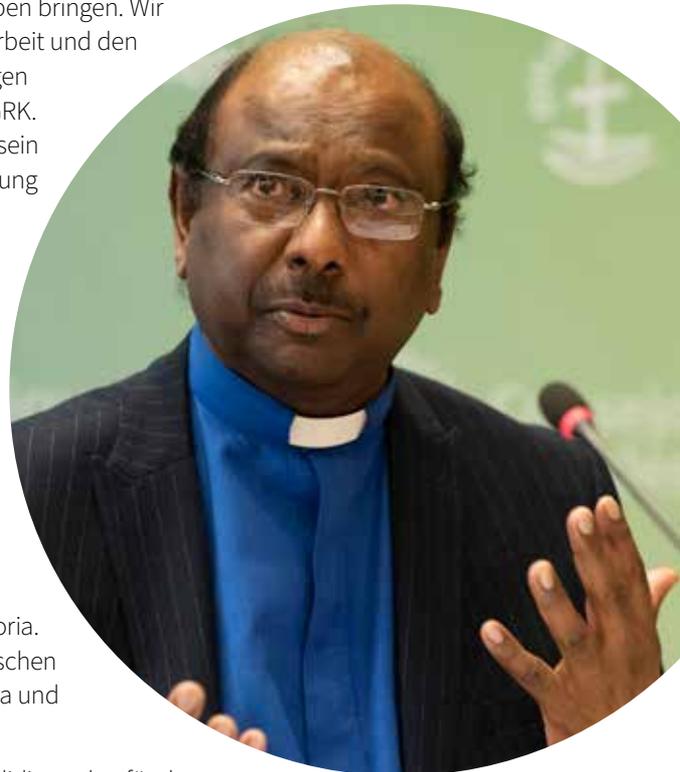
Dr. Agnes Abuom, die Vorsitzende des ÖRK-Zentralausschusses, gratulierte Pillay zur Wahl und wünschte ihm Gottes Segen für das neue Amt.

„Möge die weltweite Kirchengemeinschaft im ÖRK Sie herzlich begrüßen, für Sie beten und auf jede erdenkliche Weise zeigen, dass sie Sie unterstützen wird, wenn Sie diese wichtige Führungsposition auf unserem gemeinsamen Weg hin zur Einheit von Christinnen und Christen antreten“, sagte sie. „Sie und die ökumenische Bewegung schreiben Geschichte – und werden eine Zukunft gestalten, in der wir Gottes Liebe für einander und für alle praktisch leben können.“

Der Generalsekretär leitet die Arbeit des ÖRK und ist dessen oberster Amtsträger. Er hat die oberste Verantwortung für die Arbeit des Ökumenischen Rates und seiner Mitarbeitenden.

Dr. Pillay wird das Amt am 1. Januar 2023 antreten.

(Artikel mit freundlicher Genehmigung des ÖRK.)



GRAPE pilot project launched in Africa



The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) launched its new Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE) project in July with African church leaders.

The GRAPE project promotes, supports, and accompanies the advocacy work of WCRC member churches, amplifying the voices of local people in the struggles in which they engage and connecting them to regional and global networks.

"GRAPE is a timely intervention by the WCRC," said Lungile Mpetsheni, general secretary of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. "It is one of the ways through which the WCRC ventures into diaconal and prophetic ministries and is an expression of the WCRC's commitment to socio-economic justice."

The WCRC engages in advocacy work based on a faith commitment to the God of life who has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace and a fundamental commitment to respond to the call "to stand where God stands."

Churches, especially in the Global South, are often an integral part of the struggle for social justice and become people's platforms, where human rights and social issues are taken up directly. In situations where activists are silenced, churches provide a space where people can speak out.

The WCRC connects the local with the global and follows a local to global to local approach to ultimately affect maximum and sustainable change at the local level.

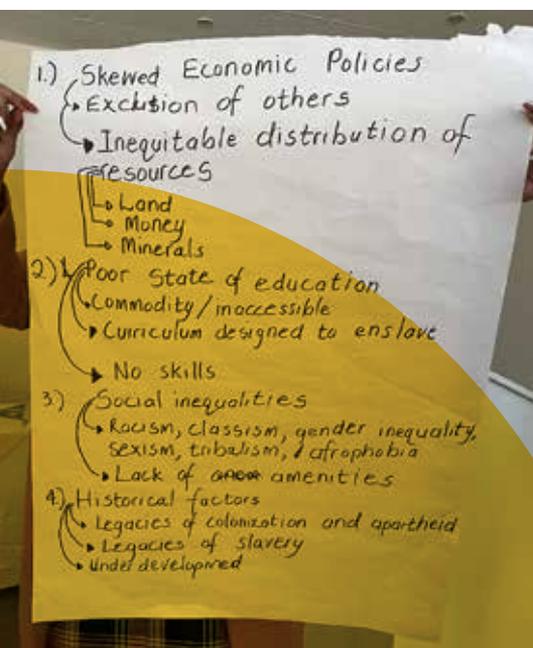
"The WCRC aims to contribute to meaningful change using its unique grassroots contacts and global

network to benefit just and peaceful societies," said Hanns Lessing, acting general secretary.

"This first pilot workshop on GRAPE was a great success which announces a good outcome for the project in view," said Emmanuel Amega of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Togo. "Having participated in this workshop, I can testify that the theme at stake is very relevant to equip the churches to react alongside governments and other decision makers to advocate on behalf of the population for its daily well-being."

The pilot phase, supported financially by *Brot für die Welt* and *Otto per Mille*, will run through December 2023 with both virtual and in-person training and meetings that will design and develop advocacy campaigns in South Africa and Kenya.

As additional financial support is secured, the GRAPE project will expand both in duration and countries impacted.



WCRC members urged to join petition for peace



An ongoing campaign to gather 100 million signatures for peace on the Korean Peninsula was the focus of a webinar held by the World Communion of Reformed Churches in July.

Korea Peace Appeal is an international campaign that seeks to amplify voices calling for an end to the Korean War and a transition from armistice to peace beyond the Korean Peninsula and throughout the world.

The campaign aims to end the Korean War and achieve peace on the Korean Peninsula by collecting 100 million signatures by 2023, the 70th anniversary of the armistice agreement. While active fighting

ceased in 1953 with the armistice, no peace agreement was ever signed.

The Korea Peace Appeal calls for:

- The end the of Korean War and establishment of a peace agreement
- The creation of a Korean Peninsula and a world free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threat
- The resolution of the conflict with dialogue and cooperation instead of sanctions and pressure
- A break from the vicious cycle of the arms race and investment in human security and environmental sustainability

The webinar provided more information on the state of the Korean Peninsula and the ecumenical advocacy efforts to achieve peace there.

More than 370 South Korean civil society organizations, religious groups, and individual supporters and more than 70 international partner organizations are participating in the Korea Peace Appeal.

Collected signatures will be delivered to the United Nations and to the governments of the countries involved in the Korean War including the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the United States, and the People's Republic of China.

More information can be found online here: www.endthekoreanwar.net

New intern focused on gender justice

Modesta Mekerese trusts that two aspects of who she is — a woman and a theologian — will be the foundation for her work in the coming year with the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Being both a theologian and a woman “is rare from where I’m coming from, but I believe it is my calling for a change. My ecumenical experience opened my eyes to the beauty of unity in diversity. And thus, it is my hope that ecumenism can be fully exercised in my community as a point of strength, not weakness,” she said.

A member of the Church of Christ (Zimbabwe) / Disciples of Christ World Communion, Modesta began her internship with the WCRC at the beginning of May. Her previous ecumenical experience includes attending the World Council of Churches Bossey Institute near Geneva, Switzerland.

“I have a vision, and I am still on the journey. In the process of my studies, I have grown fond of gender justice issues. I am looking forward to cultivate my experience as I anticipate to work on a specific project that speaks to gender justice in the future,” she said. “I am coming from a community where I believe a difference can be made in the life of a girl child with regards to culture. I want to take part in that transformation.”

In December 2021 the WCRC launched its Gender Justice Policy and will be continuing its work on gender justice through an upcoming “gender audit” of its members.

“Being part of the WCRC family therefore is going to help me develop various aspects on how gender justice may differ from place to place,” she

said. “It is a broad issue with various questions and what is immediate in this context may not be immediate in another. It will also be interesting to know how and on what bases are churches responding to gender justice currently, considering the fact that not all of the congregations are at par with the role of women in the church.”

Modesta is also looking forward to more than just work during her year with the WCRC in Hannover, Germany. “Most of all, I was so much pleased to get to know all of the staff members here; they are a perfect example of how the Communion and the community at large is supposed to integrate with all elements of love, respect, and unity. I am happy to be here almost summer time, and hoping to start learning Deutsch soon so that at least maybe I can make some more friends out there,” she said.

“I am excited on exploring this new adventure as I figure out my purpose and prepare myself to be a useful tool in God’s Kingdom,” Modesta said.

The WCRC internship programme is sponsored by the *Evangelische Mission Weltweit* (EMW), as well as donations from member churches.



» My ecumenical experience opened my eyes to the beauty of unity in diversity. «

Newest intern combines faith and passion

Priyanka Gloria Gupta brings the combination of a long commitment to her faith and a passion for social justice to the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) as its newest intern.

“Participation from my Sunday school yesteryears till present day have prepared me to become a responsible church worker. I wish to further my knowledge and skillset and become an asset to my church, primarily, and to the world as an Indian representative on a larger scale,” says Priyanka, from the Church of North India. “I trust that God is working in me and through me each passing day.”

Her interest in justice issues includes economic and ecological but focuses on gender.

“I hail from a country where subaltern women are treated unequally and the caste system seems to prevail even today. There are gender, racial, and religious persecutions every day in my country, and I believe that WCRC will help me to interact and uplift the marginalized sections of the society through the ecumenical movement ethics,” she says.

“I want to enhance my knowledge on the the intersection of women and politics in the global arena. Though church life has evolved and women have a more active role to play these days, I am still found wanting more female leaders in the everyday work of church life,” she says.

And she believes that her generation needs to be purposefully engaged in the work of the church and justice.

“Engaging with students at the school and college level has made me well versed with the challenges our youth is faced with in the church. Many have lost faith and distanced themselves from church life on account of feeling



» I trust that
God is working
in me and through me
each passing day. «

uninvited,” she says. “I yearn to help them back to Christ and hope to interact with young adults of strong faith and brainstorm innovative methods of helping my friends back at home, encouraging them to participate in church work and dedicate their lives to God.

“I am also interested in understanding the economic and ecological justice of the church. The constant persecution of our churches has left the Christian community devastated and devoid of sufficient economic support,” she says. “I dream to see the youth of our churches taking up this cause and investing their youthful energies and

God gifted talents to overturn the economical graph of the church.”

More personally, Priyanka is “looking forward to learning German and initiating friendships which I hope to cherish for a lifetime. I also hope to grow personally, being away from home, out of my comfort zone. As I begin to live independently, I hope to develop my culinary skills as well!”

The WCRC internship programme is sponsored by the *Evangelische Mission Weltweit* (EMW), as well as donations from member churches.



// A Ukrainian refugee being supported by the Reformed Church of Transcarpathia. //

FROM THE COLLEGIAL GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Stand firm and let nothing move you

“Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.”

—1 Corinthians 15:58 (NRSV)

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul puts this call at the end of his reflection on the resurrection. The appeal does not conceal the harshness of the realities of human life, yet he is deeply convinced that death does not have the last word. His appeal to stand firm calls us not to allow desperation and fear to move us away from the resurrection but continue to explore the potential of hope.

We hear this call in a time still marked by the pandemic and challenged by conflicts around the world. These events reveal the deeply entrenched injustice and violence on earth and test our faith in the potential of the resurrection to testify to the God of life.

Paul’s call to stand firm in the resurrection perspective is a rejection of all forces of death. The appeal to not move from the hope of the resurrection calls us for a renewed engagement with the question, “what does God require of us?” (Micah 16:8). Especially in situations of war and violence, what is our calling in receiving God’s gift of peace?

Marco Hofheinz, a German Reformed theologian, in his search for an answer to this question, points to a letter that John Calvin wrote in 1561. Facing brutal religious persecution, a congregation had written to Calvin: “What can we do in persecution? Should we defend ourselves against our enemies by force of arms? Should we give in to our enemies and let them triumph?”

In his answer, Calvin clearly distinguishes between legal rights and Christian calling. Legally, it is legitimate “to avenge ourselves on a mutinous populace, because this is not resisting the order of justice; nay, that the laws themselves arm both great and small against robbers.” But while Calvin affirms the legal right to resist, he cautions the congregation that by taking up this right, we “prevent God from coming to our relief.”

By waiving the right to resist, the only option left seems to be to give in to the oppressor, but this was not Calvin’s intention at all. Instead of condoning armed resistance, Calvin called for active perseverance as a third way. For him, active perseverance is a blessed state that allows God to come to our relief.

We should never condone injustice, oppression, or violence. But even if we agree that in some situations armed resistance is legitimate or even mandated, we are called to act within the space that God’s promise opens for our witness. The Accra Confession calls such witness “covenanting for justice”: By entering into God’s covenant with all creation, Christians become part of God’s saving work that promises to bring life in its fulness for all.

As the Reformed church always reforming according to God’s Word, we accept the challenge that requires new ways of discerning, confessing, and witnessing. We are aware that this journey might lead us through stormy waters. We might find ourselves in situations where we get to the brink of desperation when we see how little we can do to put an end to injustice and violence. At these moments, we need the assurance that God is faithful to God’s promises.

God blesses us and our witness when we stand firm in the covenant and let nothing move us.

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