



Annual Report

10 April 2019

Introduction

AIPRAL presents to the Executive Committee of WCRC its annual report. It presents a brief resume of what we are doing and what our main issues are. The report is divided in the following points:

- Companionship to member churches
- AIPRAL's programs
- Communications
- AIPRAL's Legal Entity
- Ecumenism and Partnership

Companionship to member churches

Being in communication and dialogue with member churches is the very base of our task as alliance of churches. Even though, most of the communication is done in virtual ways, the presence of AIPRAL in the territory it is much value for our constituency.

From a political and social point of view, the region is facing new and numerous complex processes that bring instability to the region. The situation of Colombia, the Northern Triangle, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Brazil, just to name some are worrisome. In this process, evangelical fundamentalist movements are very active adding some extra concerns regarding the status of sexual minorities, women, Indigenous people, etc. This movement is very well spread in the region, organized and connected in the region with extensive support in the media and economic resources. Their impacts in some countries are very powerful and affect our church members too. The three explicit aspect of their agenda are: a) anti-gender equality; b) anti-LGBTQ people; and c) Christian Zionism. Unsaid agenda is very much complex and diverse but in any case related with regressive economic policies, denial of environmental issues and militarization of societies.

Having said that, we would like to underline the following situations:

Venezuela

AIPRAL has been walking close to the *Iglesia Presbiteriana de Venezuela* in this difficult period. This is done together with PC(USA) and its Venezuelan network. Last year we visited the church there and facilitate to design a concrete plan of action to ease the economic and social difficulties the country is going through. We help this church to stablish connections with other organizations like *Brot für die Welt*, ACT Alliance, etc.

Recently we joined a consultation organized with ACT Alliance and other regional actors to have a better understanding of the situation in Venezuela. As result of this process and further dialogues, we are at this point in communication with WCRC's office to produce a concept note that allows a wider ecumenical network of companionship to the churches there and their witness for a peaceful

resolution of the social, economic and political crisis of the country respecting the international laws and human rights.

In addition, we started a dialogue with a Reformed Church in Barquisimeto. This church has only one congregation but is willing to become a member of our organization. We had some contact in the past and now they are willing to move forward. However, AIPRAL's bylaws does not allow single congregations to become a member. This is not the only case. We are in dialogue with congregations and/or presbyteries and synods that are willing to have a relationship with AIPRAL. Then, it is very much a need to find mechanisms of participation, cooperation and dialogue for this new reality.

Northern Triangle

Given the recommendations approved by the 2017 WCRC General Council to support the so-called Northern Triangle and our churches there, AIPRAL, PC(USA), and the *Iglesia Reformada Calvinista de El Salvador* have been working together to empower young leadership to build communities of peace. We understand this project as a way to empower local communities and allowing, at small scale, the people to have some alternatives to migration. This program started in El Salvador but in will develop in the other countries of the region. Rev. Carlos Tamez, coordinator of the program of Justice and Communion, is part of the leading group in this issue.

In addition, we have visited the churches in the region, especially in El Salvador and Honduras. Thanks to PC(USA) we have started contact and dialogue with the Presbyterian Church in Honduras. This church is not member of AIPRAL but we have begun a process of mutual knowledge and cooperation.

The *Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala* has sent a letter expressing its wish of withdraw from our organization. The letter itself it is not very clear about motives and we have been trying very hard to have some communication with this church. Moreover, the IENPG has in a middle of a conflictive process or reorganization.

The president of AIPRAL, Rev. Agnaldo Pereira Gomes, has participated in the General Assembly of the *Iglesia Presbiteriana y Reformada de Cuba*. In this way, we reinforced our relationship with this church that is one of AIPRAL's founders. In addition, it offered a unique opportunity to know the processes of changes and transformation happening in the island and to support churches' efforts to witness the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mexico

After our General Assembly in 2016, the *Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana de México* withdrew from the regional council but continued as a member of the WCRC. As anticipated in last year report, Rev. Chris Ferguson, Rev. Agnaldo Pereira Gomes, Raissa Brasil and Rev. Darío Barolin had an encounter with the board of the INPM to dialogue about the differences with AIPRAL and how to work on that. We had a good dialogue and we agreed to take some steps to work in each side. Unfortunately and repeating the same pattern, later we received a letter informing that the GA of the INPM also decided to withdraw also from WCRC.

In the same visit, we had a meeting with the *Comunión Mexicana de Iglesias Reformadas y Presbiterianas*. This church has been became already member of AIPRAL and we expect that the same process is taken by WCRC. It is very important to be in companionship of this church with is striving for being a testimony of God inclusive love.

AIPRAL's Programs

After a period of evaluation, we decided that the different departments of AIPRAL should work together having women and young as key element of all their activities. Moreover, the issue of justice and communion should be key to the theological and mission department as the other way around. The results are promising so far. We are having a better and stronger participation of women and youth in our activities, as well that a better understanding of the different issues when we approach them with a transdisciplinary approach.

Paz en tu territorio (Peace in your territory)

This program is intended to produce materials and train young people and specially women for leadership and peacemaking. This year (May 23 to 26) the encounter for southern cone will be done in Uruguay and there are national follow ups events in the Northern Triangle. The process in the Caribe will start in the second part of the year.

Justicia de Cristo, paz para ellas, paz para el mundo (Justice of Christ, peace for women, peace for the world)

This program produces materials and different resources from a Reformed perspective for specific dates to make visible the situation of women and ways to stop violence against women and empowerment of women. Annually they organize a national encounter to produce material for the Praying Day for Latinoamerican Women. Last year it was organized in Brazil and this year it will be held in Mexico.

Accra Confession and the SDGs

AIPRAL intends to dialogue from its tradition and theological heritage, particularly in the Confession of Accra with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It seeks to critically articulate the Reformed diaconal and theological tradition, with the SDGs and thus offer a theological framework and action plan for the member churches in search of a strategic alliance in the implementation of the SDGs.

We are in the process of producing a plan of action to facilitate the dialogue in our constituency on the possibilities and interaction with the SDG from a reformed perspective.

Communications

La Voz (The Voice)

Most of our communication is digitally done. *La Voz* is published quarterly. This newsletter intends to keep a process of dialogue, information and theological reflections among our constituency. Also, the web page and Facebook are used to reach a wider audience.

AIPRAL's Legal Entity

At this moment, we are in the final stage to obtain the legal entity in Uruguay. It will be a legal entity of first degree and composed by the actual member of the Executive Committee elected in the last assembly. This entity will be renewed in their membership after every assembly of AIPRAL.

Ecumenism and Partnership

We constantly make effort to empower ecumenical relationships. The most remarkable are:

- Participation in the Echo School organized by WCC in El Salvador.

- Together with WCRC we were part of the efforts to bring an ethical approach to the G20 meetings.
- Active membership in ALCnoticias: See: <http://alc-noticias.net/es/>
- We cooperate with CWM in the organization of DARE 2018 in Mexico.
- We are glad to be in dialogue and cooperation with several churches outside our region like PC(USA), Church of Scotland and have started communication with the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan and Reformed Presbyterian Church in Equatorial Guinea.
- We are an active member of Religions for Peace and participate as much as possible in their activities. Our former president, Gabriela Mulder, coordinates the women's area of this organization.
- We participated last March in a very important meeting organized by ACT Alliance. It intended to have a better and deeper understanding of the situation in our region. It is expected to be a major level of relationship and partnership.
- We were part of WCRC delegation at the Global Christian Forum held in Bogotá.

Rev. Dr. Darío Barolin
Secretario Ejecutivo