

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS MINISTRY

Ryan D. Smith, Director and Representative to the United Nations

1. The report of the Ministry at the United Nations to the 2019 Executive Committee meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches highlights aspects of the ongoing witness that a presence at the UN in New York makes possible. This report is not exhaustive. It suggests places and points to moments where the ministry has been engaged.
2. The past year, 2018-2019, the Ministry at the United Nations has maintained two broad areas: to equip individuals and communities to engage in global discipleship and to advocate for justice and peace in the name of Jesus Christ.
3. The ministry's staffing pattern remains unchanged: a Director/Representative to the United Nations, a Mission Specialist for International Advocacy and a Young Adult Volunteer. The Young Adult Volunteer position will be eliminated in July 2019, and funds used to support that position will be reallocated to hire part time administrative support for the office. The Presbyterian Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church (USA) funds 100% of expenses at the United Nations Ministry.
4. In 2019 and 2020, the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations joins the Presbyterian Mission Agency in its works on Matthew 25 and the three focus areas of **congregational vitality, structural racism and systematic poverty**.
5. Rooted in the Reformed tradition, we affirm that God, Creator and Sovereign of all, so loved the world that Jesus the Son was sent with a message of justice and peace, redemption and reconciliation. God calls us to serve as ambassadors for Christ seeking God's peace and reconciliation in a world where humanity and creation are wounded, broken, and in need of healing.¹ Together we seek life in all its fullness by:
6. The ministry worked with General Secretary and the Justice and Witness Executive Secretary of the WCRC to examine how to strengthen our relationship. A new memorandum of understanding between the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the World Communion of Reformed Churches is in process.
7. The ministry supported the work of the WCRC through participation in the 3rd Meeting of the Ecumenical Panel on a **NIFEA** and the solidarity visit on the **US/Mexico border**.
8. Addressing the issue of **environmental justice** through participation in the process to implement recommendations of the UN climate change conference. The Presbyterian Church (USA) sent delegates to the UN Conference of Parties negotiations in December.
9. The Presbyterian Church (USA) sent a delegate to the International Conference on the Global Compact for **Migration** in Morocco. Our delegate partnered with the ecumenical community through a partnership with Churches Witnessing with Migrants.
10. Advocated for a just and lasting peace in **Syria**. We continue to advocate with the United Nations Security Council and are a founding member of the Syria Working Group within the United Nations civil society community. The Working Group is in transition, however advocacy on a just and lasting peace in Syria continues.

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

11. Engaging the **UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**. In 2019, the priority theme was: Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and a review theme was: Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development (agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session). Twenty-seven women from the Presbyterian Church (USA) participated in formal sessions, side events and advocacy on the agreed conclusions document. The Presbyterian Church (USA) welcomed the accreditation of Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (USA) as an independent organization. The ministry worked faithfully with Reformed partners from Association of Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand and Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (USA). The delegation worked in partnership with Ecumenical Women and Faith and Feminism. We hope to welcome partners from the World Communion of Reformed Churches in future CSW events.
12. The ministry hosted a delegation for the **United Nations Commission on Social Development**. The delegation focused attention on the need for reformation in incarceration systems in the world. The ministry co-sponsored two events during the Commission and welcomed the Rev. Stanley Chimesya, prison chaplain, Church of Central Africa, who spoke at both events co-sponsored by the ministry. We have developed a working relationship with the International Prison Chaplains Association and look forward to continuing this work together.
13. Participated in the United Nations Permanent Forum on **Indigenous Issues**.
14. Participated in the Red Hands Campaign to end the use of **child soldiers**. The Red Hand Campaign advocates with governments to sign or ratify the Optional Protocol on the Use of Children in Armed Conflict.
15. Expressed concern for the protection of religious minorities in **Iraq and Syria** with special attention to Christians.
16. Submitted statements to the United Nations in support of the **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender** community. Advocated with governments on the decriminalization of LGBTQI community and support marriage equality for our siblings in Christ.
17. Expressed support for the United Nations General Assembly Resolution call for lifting the US Embargo on **Cuba**.
18. Participated in the NGO Working Group on **Israel-Palestine**. This group is in the process of reforming. It advocated for the Security Council to adopt the proposed resolution on the settlements and is monitoring the discussions around the question of statehood for Palestine. Attended sessions of Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.
19. Monitored and advocated on **Nicaragua, Venezuela and Colombia** and advocated with the United Nations Security Council on issues related to migration, development, human rights, democracy and peace.
20. Monitored and advocated on **Sudan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Cameroon** and advocated with the United Nations Security Council on issues related to migration, development, human rights, democracy and peace.
21. The ministry supported the WCC-EAA **HIV** Strategy of the Faith on the Fast Track Campaign through participation in New York based consultations as well as participation in the Prayer breakfast hosted around the United Nations General Assembly.

22. Participated in the **NGO Working Group on Religious NGOs** who host multiple events about the role and engagement of the faith community in civil society and sustainability.
23. Provided a forum to call attention to the ongoing political crisis on the **Korean Peninsula**. The ministry hosted civil society representatives from Korea and continued our ongoing advocacy work for a just and lasting peace. Attended the Global Peace Forum on Korea and hosted an interfaith prayer service for the United Nations community.
24. The Rev. Douglas Leonard, from the Reformed Church in America is serving as Director of the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Office in New York. The director of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations continues working on ways our two offices can coordinate more together. We maintain relationships with ACT Alliance and the Lutheran World Federation as well.
25. Created congregation resources on the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**. The ministry is working on an updated version of our resource with biblical reflections from mission partners.
26. There continue to be needs and opportunities for the Reformed family to work and witness for peace and justice within the context of the UN.
27. I give thanks for all who have been partners in the work described above and who support the ministry through prayer, participation and financial gifts. I am particularly grateful for my colleagues Sue Rheem and Carson Smith and the ecumenical community at the UN.