



## Report of the Latin America Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches (AIPRAL)

WCRC's input provides the substantial foundation on which AIPRAL's work is built. The fundamental axes of our work for the 2018-2020 period are:

- The empowerment of women and especially young women.
- The creation of a youth leadership for peace.
- Reflection of the contributions of Reformed theology (Accra and Sao Paulo) and ecumenical theology on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in search of strengthening diakonia and its impact in the region.
- Accompaniment to the primary and secondary educational instances of the churches in the region.
- Accompanying the churches in their various training needs, such as institutional development and emergencies.
- Communication and theological formation with member churches.
- Participation in the regional ecumenical movement and support for Spanish and Portuguese-speaking churches.

### 1. Women

This department continued to publish communications aimed at the churches to raise awareness and proposals for action in relation to gender violence and generations.

Communications were issued for significant dates such as International Women's Day, the day of the fight against gender violence, etc.

A series of online meetings were held, culminating in a face-to-face meeting of the women of the member churches in Uruguay to prepare the material for the Day of Prayer for Latin American women. <https://aipral.net/genero/2021-dia-de-oracion-por-la-mujer>

We continued to accompany initiatives and proposals arising from women's organizations and movements within the member churches, the ecumenical movement and civil society. An example of this is the active participation in the Platform of Faith-Based Organizations - United Nations Population Fund.

The network of women in the member churches is kept active and materials are provided for awareness-raising, prevention and guidance on gender-based violence, and the promotion and empowerment of women. Based on the experience of a member church, its protocol for action in situations of gender violence and generations was shared.

For the coming year, a work program on gender justice was defined, with the understanding that it constitutes a transversal programmatic axis, with specific activities and resources, being linked to the other programs of AIPRAL. The objective of this program is to make society in general aware of the drama of gender violence in our continent and to make the

Alliance's position on the matter visible. The objective is: To make visible our position and our commitment from the evangelical message, the call for justice and peace. This is done under three premises: 1. Training; 2. To create spaces of intersection; 3. Advocate publicly and within the churches of AIPRAL.

## **2. Youth**

*The creation of a youth leadership for peace.*

As a continuation of the work done, a space for monthly online meetings of young people was consolidated in what was called Formándonos (Network).

Given the pandemic conditions, the meeting of the Caribbean region of the "peace in your community" program is yet to be held.

The work was focused on the participation of young people in the pre-assembly held in February 2022.

## **3. Theology and mission**

### *3.1. Accompaniment of theological formation spaces.*

The link with seminaries continued and theological formation activities were organized with them. We especially emphasized the spaces of continuous formation promoted in conjunction with the Ecumenical Network of Theological Education.

On the other hand, the effort of the work was the realization of the training cycle "Miradas." Seven monthly online meetings were held with an average attendance of 75 people per event.

This project counted on teachers from seminaries and theological faculties, people with experience and/or university training in each topic.

The initially proposed objectives were satisfactorily achieved:

- a) to foster conversations, reflections, and practices related to these themes and to the vitality of the post-pandemic Church, and its prophetic unfolding in society.
- b) to link Reformed theologians in Latin America and the Caribbean and to generate collaboration and exchange with seminary students and pastoral roles and leadership of Presbyterian and Reformed churches.
- c) To produce knowledge that feeds the process of dialogue, study, and discernment in the pre-assemblies of women and youth, in the conference and in the Ordinary Assembly.

At the conclusion of this first cycle of the Miradas project, a pedagogical route for approaching the different themes was developed.

The Miradas project, and especially its pedagogical proposal, were presented at the first conference (April 1) prior to the Assembly. It is proposed that this project continue in the following period in its double dimension: a) deepening in these themes and including new

ones; b) facilitating for the different ecclesial and community leaderships the dialogue on these themes from a Reformed and ecumenical theological perspective. For the latter, the pedagogical paths elaborated are a fundamental tool. See <https://aipral.net/proyecto-miradas>

In this area, we continued with training spaces based on the guide on Water and Climate Change "We are on time" prepared by AIPRAL in its assembly of 2016.

### *3.2 Zacchaeus Project*

From December 1 to 3, 2021, the campaign for tax justice and reparation Project #ZAQUEO - #ZacTax, rooted in the vision of a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA), was presented at the Reformed University in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia. The campaign seeks the promotion and generation of a paradigm shift of regional and global tax and economic systems that act as the figure of Zacchaeus in the New Testament (Luke 19: 1-10). This process beginning in 2021 was designed to address the power of economic and financial institutions in the contemporary globalized world. It is a joint ecumenical effort of WCRC, World Council of Churches, Council for World Mission, Lutheran World Federation, and World Methodist Council.

The Latin America and Caribbean launch was organized by the Alliance in conjunction with WCRC and CUR/Qonakuy. It was a meeting of leaders and leaders of churches and academic spaces in the region, together with high-level speakers, who shared their critical views on the fiscal and tax systems of Latin American countries, as well as theological perspectives that vindicate the active role of faith in the promotion of fairer national and global economic systems.

As a result of this meeting, a road map was drawn up and presented at the second conference (April 2) and is awaiting the support of the XIII assembly so that it can be continued in the next period.

It should be noted that the WCC assembly will include a workshop by the promoters of #ZAQUEO in the region, for the presentation of this process.

## **4. Communications**

More than ever, digital communication has become a fundamental tool for communication with and formation of our member churches. The digital edition of *La Voz* (quarterly), is the constant tool in which relevant topics are addressed. At the same time, the social media enhance this tool and serve as a means of rapid communication with a larger membership.

The media strategy focused on giving centrality to the website, which was updated from a blog format with entries on various topics to a real web portal, with news differentiated by thematic categories, a section presenting the organization, a section of resources and downloads, and the creation of specialized sections, such as the educational tool *Miradas*, or specific work areas during virtual activities.

Due to the pandemic, the work specialized in generating and technically supporting the virtual instances of meetings and conferences, a great example being the cycle of meetings Miradas, as well as the production of audiovisuals within the framework of the Day of Prayer for Latin American Women and video messages from the Executive Committee and others. We collaborated in this aspect for the International vigils for peace in Colombia, several conference spaces, and various activities of the departments. The pandemic situation also accelerated the need to establish a virtual format for Executive Committee meetings, a situation that facilitates the work of continental organizations. In addition, we worked hard to hold AIPRAL's pre-assemblies, conferences, and assemblies in an online format, seeking to ensure equitable and transparent participation.

Finally, during 2021 the symbol of the logo (iconic part) was modified in agreement with the World Communion of Reformed Churches: thus the current visual identifier of the Alliance was created, which adopts the semantic load of the emblem of the Communion and visually relates the organizations. The color palette is adopted and the logo (written part) is kept, achieving a brand with greater visual density and linkage to the Reformed universe.



## **5. Missional and institutional strengthening**

*Accompanying the churches in their various training needs, such as institutional development and emergencies.*

The on-site accompaniment to the member churches was all done remotely, except for the visits made to the Presbyterian Church of Colombia and the Presbyterian Church of Colombia Reformed Synod, as well as to the Reformed Presbyterian Churches of Cuba and the Moravian Church of Cuba.

The forms of accompaniment are varied, from direct communications with the board of directors, participation in events organized by the churches, correspondence, etc.

We also highlight the dialogue with other sister churches. One has requested its adhesion to the Alliance and with others we are in the process of dialogue.

We also highlight that with the support of the emergency fund of the Partnership Fund, the assistance work of the Christian Reformed Church of Honduras in its response to the victims of the floods in that country was supported in solidarity.

During 2021, a consultation process was held with the member churches to postpone the assembly to the year 2022 and then to hold it online.

In this task of accompaniment, the constant need for the formation of cadres knowledgeable in the Reformed and/or Presbyterian forms of government was detected. We also detected a strong aggressive presence of evangelical fundamentalist sectors that seek to polarize the discussions in the churches and thus their division.

Finally, a good part of the work of the year was the organization of the XIII General Assembly of AIPRAL. Its organization in a context of so much uncertainty demanded a lot of work from the Executive Committee to adjust and make new decisions with the evolution of the pandemic.

Its motto — "Sharing in hope" — is based on John 6:9 and the action of the boy who shares his five loaves and two fish and initiates the miracle of a multitude being filled. We understand that this context, dominated by the impotence or inability to transform a reality that appeared overwhelming, is broken by the hopeful gesture, almost naively hopeful, of a child who brings his gifts and they reach the hands of Jesus. Then the miracle happened.

We came to this assembly after having created a rich space for sharing and learning through the Miradas and Zaqueo projects (see above).

In this area we finally highlight the work from the executive secretariat in relation to WCRC: WCRC General Secretary Search Committee; COVID & Beyond project; WCRC General Council Task Group; among others.

## **6. Participation of the regional ecumenical movement**

We also highlight the relationships with other WCRC member churches in our region: Positively the constant work of coordination and mutual support with the Presbyterian Church (USA), the collaboration with the Church of Scotland, and the dialogue with the Spanish Evangelical Church. On the other hand, it is with sadness that we note the launching by the Reformed Church in America of a project in the region that ignores the member churches of the Communion and its regional council. The general secretariat of the WCRC was informed about this.

AIPRAL supports and leads several ecumenical spaces in the region. We highlight here the role in ALCnoticias that allows us to strengthen this growing and yet fragile communications space so vital for the region. We led the international ecumenical accompaniment to Dipaz Colombia; facilitated several online accompaniment spaces and translation spaces to coordinate advocacy actions in the United Nations Security Council; the search for better coordination of ecumenical work in relation to peace; organized, supported, and participated in the ecumenical pastoral visit. Together with ACT Alliance, we promoted the sending of a solidarity container from the Dominican Republic to the National Council of Churches in Cuba. We worked together with Qonakuy in the realization of the Zacchaeus meeting and a proposal for a "School of Economy" and other actions related to ethics and economy were elaborated.

Through the Department of Justice and Communion, we continued to participate in the Interreligious Alliance for the 2030 Agenda; from the presidency, we actively participated in Religions for Peace, and the president was elected Religions for Peace in Brazil. In Brazil, two interreligious spaces were promoted in connection with the climate crisis and the Amazon rainforest. The support and relationship with "Resistencia Reformada" and CEBEP in Brazil continued.

The secretariat joined the work of the theology group Global Kairos for Justice and is also working on an international meeting on Christian Zionism within the framework of a dialogue between the Palestinian and Latin American situations.

## **7. General Assembly**

Prior to the Assembly, Youth and Women's Pre-Assemblies were held in February, and there were public conferences at the beginning of April — all of which were virtual.

The XIII Assembly was also held virtually 21-23 April, bringing together 39 delegates from the current 20 member churches. It developed a work plan for the coming years that continues AIPRAL's work as the Reformed faith in mission in Latin America.

A new Executive Committee was also elected and installed and includes the following officers:

President: Wertson Brasil de Souza (Brazil)  
Vice-President: Berla Andrade de Vargas (Venezuela)  
Treasurer: Yasmín Mosquera García (Colombia)  
Youth Department Director: Emilia Ahumada Tapia (Chile)  
Director of the Women's Department: Blanca Geymonat Gonnet (Uruguay)  
Director of the Dept. of Theology and Mission: Paulo C.M. Pereira Jr. (Brazil)  
Director of the Department of Justice and Communion: Dan González Ortega (Mexico)  
Executive Secretary: Dora Arce-Valentín (Cuba)

According to the WCRC Constitution<sup>1</sup>, the newly elected president, secretary, and treasurer should be confirmed by the WCRC Executive Committee. It is requested that the Executive Committee take such action, confirming the new president, treasurer, and executive secretary.

*Rev. Dario Barolin*  
*Executive Secretary*

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<sup>1</sup> WCRC Constitution, Article XVI, Section C: Each Regional Council shall meet from time to time within the geographic area, provide for an Administrative Committee, and elect officers, including a Moderator (or President or Convener), a Secretary and a Treasurer, pursuant to its Bylaws, subject to confirmation by the Executive Committee.