

## **Report of the Collegial General Secretariat**

### **Working with an Integrated Approach**

Following the decisions of the Executive Committee on its meetings in May and November/December 2021, the Collegial General Secretariat (CGS) was tasked with the following duties:

- the responsibilities of the General Secretary;
- the tasks according to the job descriptions of the different executive secretary positions;
- the coordination of the sustainability initiative;
- and an exercise to strengthen existing regions and start preparing the establishment of regions in areas where they do not yet exist.

To do justice to all these different expectations, the CGS decided to follow an integrated approach that would allow addressing different aspects within one activity.

Several countries have relaxed their COVID-19 restrictions. This allowed the CGS to reach out to member churches and start discussing and implementing different activities.

Since the beginning of the interim period, we have been in intensive contact with churches in the regions stated below. The exercise will be continued to reach all parts of the Communion. Following the integrated approach, the CGS was represented by two or even all three of its members. This allowed us to address the different dimensions of the work assigned to us.

#### *Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAAC)*

Main contacts: CANAAAC steering committee, Reformed Church in America, Christian Reformed Church in North America, United Church of Christ, Presbyterian Church (USA), Princeton Seminary, McCormick Seminary, Calvin Seminary, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

Perspectives for deeper cooperation: Racism, indigenous people, people living with disabilities, theological education, Christian worship.

#### *Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC)*

Main contacts: ACRC executive committee, member churches in Cameroon.

Perspectives for deeper cooperation: GRAPE programme, Ecumenical Forum for Justice and Peace in Cameroon.

#### *WCRC Europe*

Main Contacts: European steering committee, Tavola Valdese, Church of Scotland, Protestant Church in the Netherlands, Church of Hungary, Reformed Church in Transcarpathia, Evangelical Church of Westphalia, Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW), Bread for the World, International Reformed Theological Institute.

Perspectives for deeper cooperation: Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome, GRAPE programme, Ukraine network, migration, theological education, freedom of religion and belief.

*Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC)*

Main Contacts: NEAAC Council, Presbyterian Church of Korea, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, National Council of Churches in Korea, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

Perspectives for deeper cooperation: 2025 General Council, Taiwan Ecumenical Forum, Ecumenical Forum for Korea, theological education, theology of life.

*South Asia*

Main Contacts: Church of North India, Church of South India, National Council of Churches in India, Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, United Theological College.

Perspectives for deeper cooperation: formation of a South Asian region, freedom of religion and belief, theological education, children, sexuality.

*Southeast Asia*

Main Contacts: Church of Christ in Thailand.

Perspectives for deeper cooperation: 2025 General Council, formation of Southeast Asian region.

**Sustainability**

The Sustainability Task Group submitted proposals about the understanding of sustainability, the methodology of the sustainability initiative, and a tentative assessment of the sustainability situation in its report to the extraordinary Executive Committee meeting in November/December 2021. Applying the proposed methodology, the CGS held perspective discussions with regional councils, communicated with church leaders and partners, and convened round table discussions.

Results of these meetings have been entered into the report of the Officers' Committee and the programme report below. At this point, we want to share some general observations.

Our experiences in the meetings with different member churches and partners were quite diverse. In areas with established regions, we experienced very positive feedback on the life and mission of the Communion. However, in areas where there are no established regions yet, we had to share basic information on the work of the WCRC at some places. This observation affirms the need to strengthen the regions to involve them more deeply in the life of the WCRC.

All member churches and partners have responded well to the definition of sustainability adopted by the Executive Committee during its extraordinary meeting (Action 12) that emphasized the sharing of all the gifts of the Spirit. As it will be demonstrated in the programme report below, this idea of sharing encouraged numerous ideas about how member churches and partners could contribute to the life and work of the Communion.

Several member churches pledged personnel capacity to coordinate activities or offered to implement particular programmes on behalf of the Communion. There is immense potential in this idea of sustainability that is built on sharing resources.

Seeing this support, we are not worried about the future of the WCRC as a Communion. Member churches and partners affirm that the WCRC is relevant and are willing to support its mission. However, there are dangers to the future of the WCRC as an institution with a central structure that is financed through a core budget. The COVID-19 pandemic and the structural changes in world Christianity have reduced the available income. Several churches that we have been in contact with experience their own sustainability challenges. Some had to reduce staff to secure their own sustainability. Despite these difficulties, we have not received signals that churches plan to reduce their contributions. On the contrary, some churches are searching for additional funds.

But, like in November, we have to report again that we have not received pledges that would cover the projected deficits of a core budget with the inclusion of a general secretary. The Officers' Committee discuss the consequences of this situation in their report on the future leadership model of the WCRC.

## **Strengthening the Regions**

### *The Significance of the Regions*

The significance of the regions for the life and work of the Communion cannot be emphasized enough. In between General Councils, member churches participate in the mission of the WCRC mainly through the work of the regions. Regional meetings offer opportunities to keep in contact, share information about programmes and initiatives, and discern the work of the WCRC. Regional leaders participate in governance meetings and voice the ideas of their regions in the discussion about the direction of the Communion. Regional programmes allow the regions to adapt the mission of the WCRC to meet the challenges of the different regional contexts.

Global programmes of the WCRC should always be implemented in cooperation with the regions. The current Strategic Plan states: "All programmatic activities will strengthen the regions, engaging member churches with their regional councils and engaging regional councils both with each other and the secretariat" (Organizational Goal 13). However, while some progress in the communication between the general secretariat and the regions has been made, this commitment is not yet fully implemented.

### *Regional Consultation*

In the context of the sustainability discussion, the CGS has held perspective discussions with the ACRC, WCRC Europe, CANAAC, and NEAAC. In this discussion, the wish for convening a regional consultation has been expressed. Such meetings are convened at irregular intervals. They offer opportunities to strengthen interregional cooperation, develop the relations between regions and the general secretariat, and prepare the regional input for General Councils and other significant gatherings.

In 2022 a consultation of regional leaders was held virtually on 8 and 15 February. The recommendations adopted by this meeting highlighted the importance of developing relations between the regions and the general secretariat. It was resolved that the general secretariat will hold an annual meeting with the regional leaders. The secretariat was also requested to support plans and projects that emerge from the regions.

The regional leaders stressed the wish to develop the relationships between the regions. Such contacts should allow the regions to pray with one another, get to know one another, provide care for one another, as well as to share best practices and main concerns.

The consultation also encouraged the regions to encourage the formation of regional youth platforms and allow them to interact globally.

### *Establishment of New Regions*

In recent years, it has been lamented frequently that in large parts of Asia, the Middle East, and the Pacific, the WCRC has not yet created regional structures. Therefore, the Executive Committee resolved at its extraordinary meeting in 2021 to authorize the creation of a process to explore the development of regional councils in Asia, the Middle East, and the Pacific, with the understanding that the next General Council could formally constitute any new councils.

The CGS has started such a process in South Asia and consulted with the two united churches in India. In these discussions, it became evident that connecting churches in areas where there is no established tradition of regional work will require considerable resources. The exercise must, therefore, be seen as a long-term project that needs to be fostered on a regular basis.

### **Communications**

Despite less time available to devote to the communication needs of the Communion, not only have all regular communications continued but several larger projects have also been undertaken in the last year.

*Reformed Communiqué*, the WCRC's thrice-yearly print/PDF newsletter continued as scheduled. The August 2021 edition was especially important as it focused on the transition from General Secretary Chris Ferguson to the Collegial General Secretariat, while the December 2021 edition featured the decisions taken at the extraordinary Executive Committee regarding the next General Council and the ongoing search process for the next general secretary.

The monthly WCRC eNewsletter continues to feature articles posted to the WCRC website from the previous month and to attract new subscribers. It is sent not only to subscribers but to all member churches (usually multiple people within each church).

Social media, specifically Facebook (in English, French, and German) and Twitter, remained useful tools throughout this last year, continuing steady growth in followers and interactions.

As was done in 2020, the English and French Facebook pages, along with AIPRAL's Facebook page (in Spanish) were key spaces for public participation in the WCRC's "COVID & Beyond" discernment process, which ran until November 2021. Each session was livestreamed on each (as well as the WCRC's YouTube Channel), allowing anyone to not only follow the process but to voice their opinions (either in the comments or by sending an email to [require@wrc.eu](mailto:require@wrc.eu)).

"COVID & Beyond" highlight booklets and videos were being developed prior to the completion of the discernment process itself, and the first of these are soon to be available (the time it takes to make coherent and usable highlight materials from the substantial amount of presentations should not be underestimated!). Joanna Hipp, a former intern and minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA), has provided essential assistance in this project.

Support from the communications desk has also been given to the development of several new resources, including the *ZacTax Tool Kit*, *Focus: Palestine* resource package, and the *Gender Justice Policy* – including reviews of the print publications, updates to the website, and news coverage of the launch of each.

Two grants were received for communications work, which have allowed the larger projects to proceed despite staff capacity limits. The *Fondation pour l'aide au protestantisme réformé* (FAP) provided a grant for the redevelopment of the WCRC website while the Cantonal Church of Zürich gave a donation that made a corporate redesign possible (including the rollout across publications) and the development of introductory videos.

*Website Redevelopment:* This has been a long time in the coming as the last full redesign was done in 2013/14, with a smaller reconfiguration in 2015. Adaptive Momentum, a website development group based in Grand Rapids, Michigan (and founded by two former Reformed Church in America staff members), is driving the process, under the guidance of the executive for communications. Work began in November 2021 and, while initially scheduled for completion prior to the Executive Committee meeting, will now not be complete until later this year. The site will be shifted from its present news-oriented focus to a site that better serves the WCRC membership. Downloadable resources will be added, with plans already forming for additional, historic pieces to be brought online in the coming years. The new site will not only reflect the current programmatic work and language of the Communion but will also be prepared to easily expand to support the 2025 General Council. The site will remain in eight languages, a not insignificant commitment.

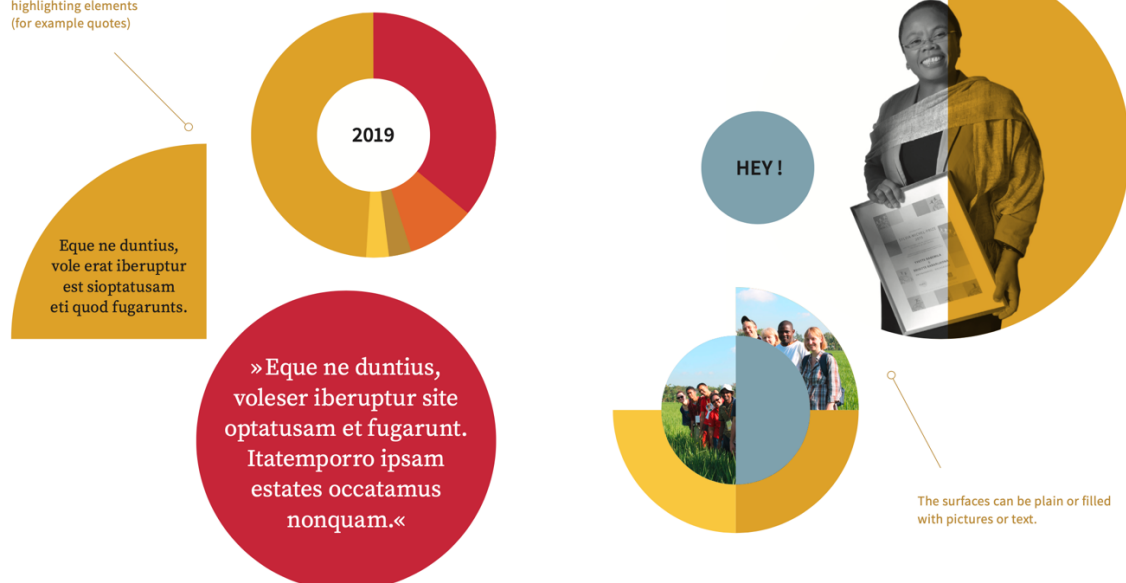
*Introductory Videos:* This, too, has been a project long in the coming. Several inhouse attempts over the last several years were not successful. Thus, outside assistance has been hired. Samuel Pfeffer Mediaproduktion was contracted to create a basic introductory video

to the WCRC, along with videos for each of the five main programmatic foci. Due to ongoing pandemic travel restrictions, the process of obtaining video interviews of Communion leaders has been slow. One round was completed in Chicago in November 2021, while another was done in May 2022 (also in Chicago, coincidentally) with more scheduled for later in the month. Once completed, the videos—including subtitles for a variety of languages—will feature prominently on the website and be available for presentations around the world.

*Corporate Redesign:* The WCRC logo, along with an accompanying style guide, were developed as part of the preparations for the 2010 Uniting General Council. Colours were updated when design work was done for the 2017 General Council. In preparation for the 2025 General Council, it was decided that a review of the entire corporate style guide was in order, especially since the colours selected for 2010 have not aged well. The WCRC logo itself was untouched but everything around it — colours, typefaces, and design elements — were all reviewed and updated. The new designs have been applied to both the *Reformed Communiqué* and *2021 Annual Report* (and are also being incorporated into the new website). An official style guide is available in both English and German. The redesigns were done by the Sitzgruppe, the same design firm that developed the 2017 General Council logo.



The circular elements are suitable for graphics as well as for highlighting elements (for example quotes)



## Personnel

With the completion of Chris Ferguson's term as general secretary at the end of August 2021, the three executive secretaries took on those responsibilities as the Collegial General Secretariat (CGS). This interim situation has created challenges and successes as noted elsewhere. Besides this increase in demands for the three executives, another cost-savings measure on the administrative level was implemented over the summer of 2021, both of which have strained staff capacities.

Werner Joecker departed in July 2021. After his resignation announcement, a thorough review of the needs of the organization was conducted with a focus on the responsibilities of the then-administrative assistants. It was concluded that the organization would be better served with three administrators (operating at a higher level) than four assistants.

Thus, Anna Krüger became Administrator for Finance and Sustainability, and Amritha Perumalla became Administrator for Programmes and Projects. Not only did they continue to provide support to the executives but they also took on new responsibilities (for instance, Anna now drives the budget development process while Amritha manages the Reformed Partnership Fund). A special thanks should be given to Elfi Abrams, recently retired from the EKD personnel office, who continues to provide consultative services to the WCRC and helped guide the review as well as the search for the position noted below (twice!).

The third position – Administrator for the General Secretariat – was filled by Godwin Muoneke, beginning in August 2021. Within the six-month probationary period (as set by German labour laws) it was determined that Godwin was not a good fit for the position, despite being very well liked by his colleagues. He was thus released and the position posted again in January 2022. After an extended search process, Antranik Manoukian was hired with a May start date. Antranik, an Orthodox Armenian from Lebanon, has served as assistant to the general secretariat of the Middle East Council of Churches and in the World Council of Churches General Assembly office in Karlsruhe.

During the several months without an administrator in the general secretariat, critical needs were covered by several staff members, including Eri Yoon, a former intern now working on her Ph.D. in theology at Göttingen University, who was hired on a parttime, limited term contract to focus on several organizational projects which had not been attended to since the departure of Katrina Mertz. These included an extensive inventorying, review, culling, and reorganizing of the WCRC print resources (as our storage space in the cellar next door was lost due to the redevelopment of that space), a reorganization of the various library spaces in the office (most especially that of the general secretariat), and a reorganization of the server storage, beginning with documents and images untouched since the move from Geneva.

Meta Ginting, the longest serving intern in WCRC history (thanks to a pandemic-instigated extension) returned home to Indonesia in December 2021. Another Indonesian, Taya Tuhuteru, began with us at the end of October 2021. Modesta Mekerese of Zimbabwe has joined as of the beginning of May, and Priyanka Gupta of India will come aboard this summer — providing us with three interns for several months before we revert to the

standard two upon Taya's departure this fall (this was made financially feasible due to the gap between the departure of Meta and the arrival of Modesta).

It should also be noted here that progress continues on the addition of a fourth executive secretary (with details found elsewhere) along with negotiations to bring on two seconded associate executives — funded fully by the supporting organizations. There is a good possibility that WCRC staff capacities can be significantly increased by the end of this year without impacting the core budget.

## **Operations**

Thanks should be given to all who have served and continue to serve the WCRC in these challenging times. Due to the Omicron variant (and its subvariants), the WCRC offices have not yet returned to full operations, with most staff continuing to work remotely for the majority of each week. While Zoom fatigue is being felt, staff continue to gather virtually each Monday for worship along with coordination and planning meetings. It is hoped that a “new normal” in office life will commence by this fall, though this will likely continue to include some remote work.

This “new normal” along with the potential increase in the number of people on staff in Hannover will necessitate a review of how office space is best utilized, including whether desks might be shared on a rotational basis. The work Eri has done in organizing the resource and library areas is an important step in ensuring there is sufficient room for people, too!

It was noted in last year's report that CiviCRM has successfully become the WCRC's operative database. With the departure of Werner in July and the subsequent turnover in the position of Administrator for the General Secretariat — whose responsibilities include day-to-day management of the database — planned progress on data upkeep has not yet been fully implemented. It will soon become a priority, with the 2025 General Council driving much of data updating.

An extraordinary Executive Committee meeting in November and monthly Officers' Committee meetings have used a fair amount of capacity in organizing the meetings, assisting in the development of agendas and drafting of reports, keeping the minutes, and then following up on decisions. Again, these first months of the Collegial General Secretariat have been a learning process for all involved. On top of this, a constitutionally-mandated review of all three executive secretaries was necessary. The results of these reviews will be reported elsewhere, but thanks can be given here to Katrina Mertz, who was hired to coordinate the administrative work for this process.

Minuting meetings of and providing organizational support to the collegium has also been an ongoing demand, although not dissimilar to that given to the previous leadership team, the Executive Staff Council, although with more active participation in the meetings.

Finally, administrative supervision of the administrators and interns has been a part of the executive for communications and operations portfolio since September, even as work assignments have continued to come through regular channels. Thankfully, these



supervisory demands have not been exceedingly great and assistance to fulfil some of the more technical parts has come from Elfi, Amritha, and Anna — so a specific word of thanks to them for stepping up as we have operated with even less capacity than expected for several months at the beginning of 2022.

## **Programme Work**

In 2021, the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) discerned the impact of the shortage of programme staff during the interim period in which the executive secretaries have to take up the responsibilities of the general secretary. They used this opportunity to reflect on the prospects of the WCRC programme work under the expected sustainability challenges. This discussion led to two significant affirmations: 1) Sustainability challenges should not lead to scaling back of programmes; and 2) To assure the continued implementation of programmes, the WCRC should develop a working model that would be less dependent on the capacity of the general secretariat but would rather utilize the resources of the Communion at large.

These affirmations were discerned during the Executive Committee meeting in May 2021 and referred to the general secretary for further consideration.

The CGS discussed these affirmations in its meetings with regions, member churches, ministries, seminaries, and partners and received positive feedback. Many ideas for programme cooperation emerged from these discussions. The CGS sees high potential in this cooperation and has already negotiated a number of such programme partnerships. This network support assured that the programme work could mainly proceed as planned.

As many countries reduce the COVID-19 related restrictions, we also look forward to several in-person meetings; most of them are scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2022.

## **P1: Fostering a Just Communion**

### *People Living with Disabilities*

The programme to assure full and just participation of people living with disability was the main topic of discussion at meetings of the CGS with people engaging with disability concerns in the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan.

We are very glad that Terry DeYoung, RCA coordinator for disability concerns, agreed to become the guest editor for an issue of the *Reformed World* on disability concerns that will be published in the course of the year.

The next step in this programme will be the development of a mandate on disability for our member churches that will assure the full and just participation of people living with disabilities.

### *Indigenous People*

Building an Indigenous people's network has been a priority for the WCRC since its inception in 2010. However, due to various factors this was not actualized. In 2019 a planning meeting was held that suggested a three year plan; this plan was further delayed due to COVID. Conversations have been ongoing with our North American partners for a meeting on Indigenous people. A full-scale meeting is not possible this year, but we have been invited to collaborate with the United Church of Christ in their Indigenous pre-assembly next year. In the meantime a meeting on Indigenous people and a theological education for life will be held in Asia in the last quarter of this year

### *Youth*

Furthering the youth network has been the focus during this time of pandemic. This was done by both the creation of the WCRC Youth Instagram account as well as the Lombard Prize. The Lombard Prize was conducted with the theme "Ecumenism from the Margins: Confessing a God of Life in a World Fallen among Thieves." Many young people from around the world responded to the theme, and a number of essays were received. A panel of distinguished people, including church leaders, seminary professors and past winners judged the essay, and three prizes were awarded.

## **P2: Covenanting for Justice**

### *New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA)*

The NIFEA work continued in collaboration with the World Council of Churches, the Council for World Mission, the Lutheran World Federation, and the Methodist World Council.

Webinars: Webinars/hybrid meetings were held on the occasion of the COP26, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank spring meetings.

GEM School: The GEM School could not be held for the last two years. The 2020 cohort will be meeting in Berlin 2-9 July 2022.

GEM School Manual: Work on the GEM school manual is near completion and will be released in early Autumn.

ZacTAX: The ZacTAX campaign is being implemented in the following areas by the WCRC: 1) In the AIPRAL region, plans are being made to further and deepen this; 2) European region through Kairos Europa, and this has had a lot of European churches come on board; 3) India with the National Council of Churches in India. The three regions have also been brought into conversation with each other so as to have some global planning. This has resulted in a workshop that will be held at the WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe.

NIFEA Panel: The last NIFEA panel has been working since 2014. Since this time some members have passed away and others have not been active. At the NIFEA general secretaries meeting a new NIFEA panel was proposed and accepted. This panel will be convened later this year and will facilitate a three year plan.

### *Gender Justice*

**Gender Policy:** The Gender Policy was accepted by the last Executive Committee and was launched by the WCRC at a webinar entitled “Why the Church needs Feminism.” The work is now about the implementation of the policy.

**Gender Audit:** As part of the implementation of the Gender Policy the WCRC is undertaking a gender audit of all its member churches to find out the status of women in the churches. This audit is being planned in a way that the exercise will not only lead to an understanding of the status of women within the Communion but will also be a transformative exercise in itself.

### *Anti-Racism*

A consultation on anti-racism is being planned with our North American partners in the third quarter of this year.

## **P3: Doing Theology for Transformation**

### *Global Institute of Theology (GIT)*

The Global Institute of Theology was initially scheduled for 2020 but had to be postponed several times because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are delighted that the faculty, as well as many of the selected students, have expressed that they are still interested in participating. We invited the GIT students to an essay competition on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The winners of this competition presented their reflections during a session of the “COVID and Beyond” process in October 2021.

We now plan to hold the following GIT in 2023 and consider approaching churches and seminaries in the Pacific region (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, or Fiji) to host the event. In 2025 another GIT is planned to be held in connection with the General Council.

### *Reformed World*

In 2020 the newly appointed editorial board convened and prepared two issues of *Reformed World* that were published in 2021.

The first issue published the dialogue reports that the WCRC had prepared with the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion, and the Pentecostal World Fellowship, together with a series of reflections that engage with the Reformed approach to ecumenical dialoguing.

The second issue assembled tributes to the contribution of Chris Ferguson to the work of the WCRC. This publication gives important insights into the WCRC’s engagement with transformative ecumenism, peacebuilding and justice.

### *Worship*

Worship materials for Reformation Day, along with a Reformation Day worship service featuring voices from throughout the Communion (available on the WCRC YouTube Channel,) were prepared and shared throughout the Communion in 2021.

The sessions of the “COVID and Beyond” process were embedded in worship. In the course of the process, a rich body of worship resources was produced. In its meeting with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in Grand Rapids, the CGS and worship institute agreed to make these resources available for the Communion. The process of preparing the material is ongoing, and we hope that we will be able to publish it soon.

During this meeting, the CGS also explored further possibilities for cooperation, e.g. the preparation of worship material for the annual WCRC Sunday at Reformation Day or support of the worship team of the 2025 General Council.

### *Theological Education*

In its discussions with member churches, seminaries and ecumenical partners, the CGS detected a lot of energy on questions connected to theological education. The COVID-19 pandemic created huge challenges but also opportunities that should be taken up and developed further. The experiences with Zoom teaching were described as ambiguous. Digital technology allowed the continuation of course programmes at most places. But not all students had access to the internet and buying the necessary airtime proved to be a big economic challenge for many. Many seminaries discovered that digital courses require a new pedagogy but found it difficult to access the required resources.

At the same time, the challenges of the pandemic opened new horizons for theological education. Several seminaries report good experiences in working with global student bodies. This situation allowed reflections from the perspectives of different contexts, which contributed much to the depth of theological discussions. Other seminaries used the situation to reach out beyond the limits of traditional theological education and offered programmes to support the discernment of the whole church. Several seminaries in the US engage in prison ministry.

These discussions have led to the idea of a major conference on theological education that will take place in December 2022 in Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, Ghana. This conference will consist of two parts: A hybrid conference prepared in cooperation with the WCC, LWF, and the EMW that is directed to the wider ecumenical network of theological institutions and will address the challenges and opportunities of theological education in the post-pandemic situation. Immediately afterwards we will gather representatives from seminaries and schools that are related to the WCRC. The intention of this conference is to build a WCRC network of theological institutions that will foster mutual support and allow discussion on goals and methods of theological education. This conference will also take place in Ghana. The participants will be invited to take part in the ecumenical meeting.

### **P4: Engaging God’s Mission in a Context of Crisis**

*Advocacy (Creating the Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE))*

At the extraordinary meeting in November/December 2021, the Executive Committee endorsed the GRAPE programme, approved the creation of the position of an Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy, and authorized the CGS in conjunction with the Officers' Committee and the Peace and Reconciliation Working Group to form a search committee for the appointment of the executive secretary.

These activities are on the way, and we hope that the search committee will be able to present a candidate for the executive secretary position soon. This candidate will have to be appointed by the Executive Committee by mail vote. We will share the details of the process as soon as possible.

The preparations for the launch of the Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement are on the way. We hope to conclude the discussions with funding partners soon. We have already signed a contract with the Economic Policy Research Institute to prepare the advocacy training programme and cooperate with the ACRC in preparing a conference in July to prepare the pilot projects in the African region.

#### *Ecumenical Forum for Justice and Peace in Cameroon*

After the meeting of the Ecumenical Forum for Justice and Peace in Cameroon in October 2021, the Cameroonian participants created an interreligious forum that also includes Islamic institutions in Cameroon. This network has adopted a plan of action that is currently being implemented.

#### *Ukraine Network*

Just prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the WCRC, in cooperation with WCRC Europe, invited member churches in Europe and mission organizations that engage in Ukraine for a digital consultation to prepare a joint approach to the situation. After this consultation, a network was formed that has since convened weekly to coordinate the activities of the different partners to express solidarity and support the churches in Ukraine. This network is very active and serves as a platform for sharing ideas and planning coordinated activities.

The WCRC also initiated the ecumenical peace prayer on 2 March 2022, which was co-sponsored by LWF, World Methodist Council, Mennonite World Conference, and the Conference of European Churches. The peace prayer was attended by more than 3,000 viewers.

#### *Palestine*

There is continued support for our Palestinian partners and Kairos Palestine in particular. Further the publication, *Focus: Palestine*, is being well received and efforts are on for translation. The *Focus: Palestine* document was released at a webinar in October 2021.

### **P5: Working with All the Partners God Provides**

#### *Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome*

The WCRC is in the final stages of discussions with the Tavola Valdese and the Church of Scotland about the creation of Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome. The presence shall be located in the office of the Tavola Valdese while the Church of Scotland will provide some staff capacity. The WCRC will engage on the level of programme work.

The Reformed Ecumenical Office shall

- a. seek ecumenical dialogue and engagement and joint action for peace and justice with ecumenical partners in Rome;
- b. present significant Reformed initiatives to the ecumenical community in Rome.

We are very grateful for the support of the two member churches and look forward to much enhanced possibilities for cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church and other ecumenical partners.

We also plan an annual event on Reformation Day in connection with the WCRC Sunday. This event shall uplift the Reformed presence not only in Rome but also globally.

### *World Council of Churches*

While collaborative efforts with the World Council of Churches continues on many levels the focus is now on the WCC Assembly at Karlsruhe. Towards this end the WCRC will be focusing on its justice work, particularly on its gender justice and economic justice. We have been invited to create a workshop on the theme of the “faith declaration on the ordination of women” at the Assembly.

Further at the Assembly the Communion has been asked to organize a Reformed space for meeting, as well as a worship with Communion.

As part of the build up to the Assembly we will be organizing a theological reflection on the WCC Assembly theme, “Christ’s love moves us to reconciliation and unity.” This consultation will look at the theme from a uniquely Reformed perspective and particularly seek to elucidate the implications of the theme from the perspective of the margins. The meeting will be held in South Korea in partnership with our Korean member churches.

### *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)*

In the last year, we have experienced some delays in implementing the planned programmes of the JDDJ process. Father Avelino Gonzalez, who was responsible for coordinating the JDDJ process, left the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in July 2021. The PCPCU has requested the communions that are linked to the JDDJ to pause the process until a successor has been appointed.

### *Roman Catholic Church*

The vacancy also delayed the planning of the next process of dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. The CGS officially visited the PCPCU during its retreat in Rome in September 2021. Both parties expressed their interest in soon engaging in planning the next dialogue,

but this can only be pursued after the appointment of a PCPCU staff person for the relations with the WCRC.

We hope that the creation of the Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome will help to establish closer relations with the Roman Catholic Church.

#### *Lutheran World Federation (LWF)*

Relations with the LWF continue to be very close. The CGS met with the executive staff during its visit to Geneva in September 2021. At this meeting, both parties confirmed the significance of the Wittenberg Witness for the relationship of the two communions and confirmed their willingness to strengthen joint programmatic work, particularly in the areas of theology, ecumenical relations, and justice and witness.

#### *Freedom of Religion and Belief (FORB)*

In continuation of our 2020 conference on the Freedom of Religion in which we produced a Reformed position paper on the question of freedom of religion and belief, we have been in conversation with the LWF to have a consultation that will result in a set of guidelines for FORB from a protestant perspective. A core group of theologians and church leaders from both communions have been working towards planning this meeting to be held in November 2022.

#### **Reformed Partnership Fund**

The Reformed Partnership Fund (RPF) of the WCRC provides small grants and other resources to churches that carry out development projects important to the life of a church and its surrounding community, particularly in the Global South. These projects fall within the guidelines as established by *Otto per Mille* (OPM), the primary funding partner, as well as the Church of Westphalia, which also contributes funds. These grants are intended to strengthen the ties of member churches to the WCRC, as well as meet strategic objectives of both the member church and the Communion as a whole.

In 2021, the Reformed Partnership Fund supported 26 regular projects and 11 emergency projects. Following is a brief description of the regular projects funded amongst various member churches:

1. Support for Children with Disabilities, *Iglesia Evangelica del Rio de la Plata*
2. Education Campaign and Stigma Reduction Strategy, *Presbyterian Church of Ghana*
3. Education Campaign – Educated to Heal – Churches Facing COVID-19, *Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba*
4. Computers and Beds, Motswedi Rehabilitation Center, *Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana*
5. Touch Project – Empowerment Campaign and Tree Planting, *Reformed Church in Zambia*
6. Health Care – Equipping Young Girls, *Church of South India*
7. Strengthening Ecumenical Partnership, Leadership Conference, *Church of North India*
8. Campaign to Empower Vulnerable Women and Minorities, *Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu*

9. Wholistic Transformation in Eastern Province, Zambia – Empowering Women and Girls, *Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Zambia Synod*
10. Sustainable Base for Internally Displaced Women in Douala of the Littoral Region, *Presbyterian Church in Cameroon*
11. Mission Response to COVID-19 – Regional Empowerment Campaign, *United Congregational Church of Southern Africa*
12. Pig Production, *United Church of Zambia*
13. IT and Outreach Ministry, *Church of North India*
14. Social Inclusion Project for Families with Children with Disabilities, *Eglise Presbyterienne au Rwanda*
15. After School Classes for Roma Children in Transcarpathia Ukraine, *Reformed Church in Hungary*
16. Evangelism, Training, and Development, *Church of Jesus Christ Madagascar*
17. Socio-economic support to Church Workers Due to COVID-19, *United Church of Christ in the Philippines*
18. Human Rights and Conflict Capacity Building, *Comunion Mexicana de Iglesias Reformadas y Presbiterianans*
19. Engage Disability National Conference 2021, *National Council of Churches in India*
20. Agro-Basket Project, Compassion Protestant Society, *National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon*
21. Sustaining Mission Activities, *Church of Jesus Christ Madagascar*
22. Education E-Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic, *Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Livingstonia Synod in Malawi*
23. COVID Response – Consultation and Equipping Pastors, *Church of North India*
24. Food Security Project, *Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia*
25. Peace and Reconciliation Work Colombia, *Corporacion Universitaria Reformada*
26. Livelihood Support Project – Pigs, Poultry, Trees - *Reformed Presbyterian Church in Africa*

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to unfold into 2021, the Reformed Partnership Fund dedicated funds to emergency projects to support member churches in relief efforts to combat the pandemic. Following are the member churches that received COVID-19 relief funds through the Reformed Partnership Fund:

1. *Iglesia Presbiteriana de Venezuela*, Presbyterian Church of Venezuela
2. *Baptist Community of the Faithful in Africa*, Democratic Republic of Congo (affiliate member)
3. *Association of Reformed Evangelical Churches of Burkina Faso*, Burkina Faso
4. *Diocese of Faisalabad*, Church of Pakistan
5. *Africa Inland Church*, Sudan
6. *Sinodo Igreja Protestante Iha Timor Leste*, East Timor
7. *National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon* (Compassionate Protestant Society), Lebanon
8. *Uniting Churches in Southern Africa* (Gobabis Congregation), Namibia
9. *Church of Central Africa Presbyterian*, Zimbabwe

In addition, the Reformed Partnership Fund supports member churches suddenly responding to a disaster, whether natural or humanmade.



10. *Eglise du Christ au Congo*, Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo –volcanic eruption
11. *United Church of Christ in the Philippines*, Philippines – typhoon

Through 2021, the Partnership Fund aided nearly 40-member churches, with more than 80,000 euros for emergency responses and approximately 200,000 euros for regular projects.

It should be noted that Mr. Werner Joecker who tended to the Partnership Fund left the WCRC in June 2021. The Reformed Partnership Fund is now managed by Amritha Perumalla. Anna Krüger is responsible for the WCRC's financial reporting needs to OPM.