

## **Officers Report as the Personnel Committee**

### **Background**

The WCRC Constitution in Article XIII – C specifies that, *“The Executive Secretaries shall serve a term of five years and shall be eligible for another five-year term. A comprehensive review will be scheduled at the mid-point of each five-year term and prior to the decision to appoint an Executive Secretary to a second five-year term. The performance review is conducted by the General Secretary.”*

To fulfill this requirement in the absence of a general secretary and as authorized by the 2021 Executive Committee (Action 23), the officers initiated 360-degree reviews of each of the executive secretaries in the early months of 2022. Evaluations were sent to the officers, selected members of the Executive Committee, WCRC staff members, individuals within the wider communion, and ecumenical partners. In addition, self-evaluations by each of the three executive secretaries were requested. These were compiled by President Kassab and distributed to the officers for consideration and to provide recommendations to the Executive Committee at its May 2022 meeting.

### **General Commentary**

In the comments generated within the evaluations it was widely noted that our communion is going through extraordinary times due to the absence of a general secretary. In taking on the role of a Collegial General Secretariat (CGS), the executive secretaries have added a significant role and additional responsibilities to the already robust job descriptions into which they were appointed. These extraordinary circumstances have been greatly exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic which has altered not only the working environment within the WCRC office, but also the general engagement with the wider Communion.

Still, the evaluations widely acknowledged that the “COVID-19 and Beyond: What Does the Lord Require of Us?” process enabled the communion and justice work of the SPPG to proceed in meaningful ways. The executive secretaries, particularly the two programme secretaries, were credited with creatively advancing the strategic priorities of the Communion despite lockdowns, travel restrictions, and heightened inequities in the midst of a global pandemic. It was also noted that during this time the executive secretary for communications and operations has taken on a great deal of additional responsibility for administration and management within the Hannover office.

Thus, these factors have significantly influenced the evaluations that were received: acknowledgment of the enormity of the roles the executive secretaries have been asked to fulfill, and the inability to fulfill every responsibility to its fullest extent.

*Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology: Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing*

The following comments are excerpts from Hanns' 360-degree review:

"Dr. Hanns has no doubt demonstrated impeccable commitment to the strategic focus and engagements of the Communion. He has facilitated different processes that continuous to contribute to the overall mission and goals of WCRC. Some of the notable discernment processes include peace and reconciliation, accompanying memberships in their prophetic engagements in Cameroon and other countries, freedom of religion, and 'Discerning, Confessing, and Witnessing in the Time of COVID-19 and Beyond.'"

"Hanns had a primary role in crafting the Strategic Plan and knows it very well. . .Hanns is a real asset to the execution of the plan."

"Hanns has done stellar work in furthering the goals of the organization. His ability of clear and conceptual thinking and to nuance and see the complexities of the issue are very valuable in outlining and communicating the vision of the organization."

The following comments are excerpted from Hanns' self-reflection:

*Please list the significant challenges or obstacles in fulfilling this role.*

The two main challenges I have already addressed above: My tendency to continuously take on too many responsibilities and getting involved too deeply; and my limitations in communication need to be addressed.

*Please list the growth areas you see as important for yourself in this role in the future.*

I believe that the general secretariat would be helped by some professional supervision in dealing with the multiple demands directed to the staff. With regard to communication, I would appreciate it if there was some training.

The Personnel Committee notes the above comments and believes that a growing edge for Hanns is administration and management, particularly to be willing to delegate some of the parts of his work to others. We believe this is important for his own well-being and health, as well as the health of the communion.

**Recommendation:**

**To express appreciation for the work of the Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing and to approve his appointment to a second five-year term as Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology.**

*Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness: Rev. Philip Peacock*

The 360-degree review yielded these comments about Philip:

"Rev Peacock has done an excellent job of developing the WCRC's work and commitment to justice and witness, he has strengthened and built on existing

relationships with partners, [and] created excellent resources. . . His breadth of insight into issues of justice is apparent throughout his work. This job requires someone who is tactical in relationship management as well as having theological knowledge and a desire to serve others in social justice; Rev Peacock has displayed such attributes over the last few years . . . in the ecumenical world and beyond.”

“Philip will be the first to admit that he is not an administration-minded person. His strengths evolve in the immediate contact with people and not in the conception and implementation of institutional processes. He is conscious of this limitation and appreciates and supports the engagement of others in management and governance.”

Philip’s self-reflection included these thoughts:

*Please list the significant challenges or obstacles in fulfilling this role:*

One obstacle is the workload and the amount of work to do. Honestly the world is hurting and there is a lot of work as far as furthering the justice agenda goes.

*Please list the growth areas you see as important for yourself in this role for the future.*

I want to work further on deepening and furthering my managerial and administrative skills.

The Personnel Committee notes the above comments and believes that Philip is most challenged by the managerial aspects of his position and would benefit from additional training in management and administration.

**Recommendation:**

**To express appreciation for the work of the Rev. Philip Peacock and to approve his appointment to a second five-year term as Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness.**

*Executive Secretary for Communications and Operations: Phil Tanis*

The 360-degree review process yielded these comments about Phil:

“Phil does an amazing job handling all the parts of his role. He is very responsive when issues are raised and collaborative with colleagues and members of the communion. Is very attuned to the Strategic Plan and the parts of it for which he has responsibility, but also doesn’t overstep on things that aren’t in his role.”

“His work is of very good and high quality and his many contributions is highly appreciated. Phil is reliable, customer oriented and focused on his objectives. In particular, we would like to highlight the fact that under his leadership Phil has developed and implemented the new structure of the communication setup in the WCRC. . . He works very hard with minimum supervision. He has developed good

relationships with his teammates, and colleagues and staff members of organizations served.”

Phil [is] a high contributor to the effectiveness of the staff and in achieving the goals of the WCRC Strategic Plan. Phil’s work is important, and he does well in getting the Communique out and to ensuring the information and content is what the churches need to know about WCRC. The newsletter continues to be an important between WCRC and members churches.”

Phil notes this in his self-reflection:

*Please list the significant challenges or obstacles in fulfilling this role.*

By far the biggest ongoing challenge is capacity, by which I mean we’re being asked to do more than we possibly can.

*Please list the growth areas you see as important for yourself in this role in the future.*

I’m in my final two years, and am thus working to ensure that I leave the communications office in a place that can easily be handed over to other(s) to run; and that the operations of the WCRC are in a state that they can continue without the amount of time/effort I’ve had to put into them. I would hope that my successor (should we be able to afford one) could focus her time on communications with the operational aspects rightly being moved back to the general secretariat’s office (with both the administrator and GS herself overseeing these responsibilities).

The Personnel Committee has conducted this constitutionally required mid-term review for Phil, but it does not require action by the Executive Committee. Phil will finish his second (and final) term with the WCRC in 2024. We note with deep appreciation Phil’s competent and cheerful work on behalf of the communion.