

Reformed communiqué

Articles in Bahasa Indonesia, Deutsch, English, Español, Français

Persekutuan mengarah ke Sidang Raya 2025

Kedua program yang mengarah ke Sidang Raya 2025 dan juga rencana persidangan itu sendiri disahkan oleh Komite Eksekutif dalam pertemuannya di tahun 2023.

Sidang Raya *World Communion of Reformed Churches* (WCRC) akan diadakan pada bulan Oktober 2025 di Chiang Mai, Thailand, dengan tema “Bertekun dalam Kesaksian Kita”.

Sebagian besar pekerjaan terprogram WCRC yang akan datang akan mempersiapkan Persekutuan untuk menuju persidangan, termasuk memasukkan pembelajaran dan metode dari proses *COVID & Sesudahnya*; memeriksa kembali arti kata “kekaisaran” seperti yang digunakan dalam Konfesi Accra; mempelajari secara teologis apa artinya menjadi “persekutuan;” dan mengembangkan sumber-sumber berdasarkan tema persidangan.

Sementara kelompok kaukus khusus untuk perempuan, pemuda, masyarakat adat, dan penyandang disabilitas akan lebih dekat dimasukkan ke dalam persidangan—alih-alih hanya menjadi pertemuan pra-sidang—Komite Eksekutif meminta Komite Perencanaan Sidang Raya untuk meninjau cara-cara untuk mengimajinasikan ulang bentuk dan waktu persidangan, termasuk memanfaatkan sesi virtual sebelum berkumpul secara fisik.

Dua kelompok khusus akan dibentuk untuk mempersiapkan bagian penting dari persidangan:

- 1) Kelompok Penasihat Kepemimpinan akan “menilik profil orang-orang yang perlu dipertimbangkan untuk dinominasikan ke Komite Eksekutif” untuk “memastikan bahwa kandidat yang cocok akan hadir” di persidangan.
- 2) Kelompok Perencanaan Isu Publik akan “menjangkau gereja-gereja anggota untuk mengumpulkan isu-isu

Selain itu, rencana penggalangan dana akan dikembangkan untuk “memungkinkan gereja-gereja anggota dan individu melihat kemungkinan untuk mendukung Sidang Raya” dalam berbagai cara. Menjadi catatan tersendiri bahwa Sidang Raya 2025 tidak akan dapat mengandalkan dukungan pemerintah seperti pada tahun 2017 dan dengan demikian



yang menjadi perhatian, mengembangkan metodologi untuk audiensi, dan mengembangkan pendekatan strategis untuk laporan isu-isu publik.”

Komite Eksekutif menyetujui pembentukan Dana Partisipasi Adil untuk memastikan bahwa mereka yang membutuhkan bantuan keuangan untuk hadir dapat didukung; namun, Komite Eksekutif menetapkan biaya partisipasi minimum sebesar 1.000 euro bagi mereka yang akan mendaftarkan diri untuk menerima dukungan tersebut. Biaya pendaftaran sebesar 500 euro untuk delegasi swadaya juga disepakati.

dukungan dari seluruh Persekutuan akan diundang.

Komite Konstitusi dan Keanggotaan ditugaskan untuk meninjau kembali kategori keanggotaan dalam Persekutuan, yang akan dilakukan sembari meninjau konstitusi dan peraturan WCRC untuk kemungkinan amandemen lainnya—yang harus disampaikan dalam Sidang Raya untuk dipertimbangkan.

Komite Eksekutif mengambil keputusan menindaklanjuti laporan dari Komite Perencanaan Sidang Raya dan Kelompok Program Rencana Strategis selama pertemuannya pada 20-24 Mei di Johannesburg, Afrika Selatan.

ZacTax Campaign Relaunched in Africa

“**W**ax justice is a matter of faith,” said Suzanne Matala. “By faith, [all] are entitled to abundant life. Ordinary people have a right to know and to participate in decision-making tables that affect our own God-given dignity.”

Matala, of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and Oikotree, was the keynote speaker at the relaunch of the ZacTax Campaign in Africa, held on 20 May 2023, at the Mannah Conference Center in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The event offered faith-rooted African perspectives on just taxation and reparations, shared concrete proposals to advance corporate and wealth taxation as well as social and ecological reparations, and relaunched the ecumenical Zacchaeus Tax campaign for tax justice and reparations in the Africa.

“Among the poor we already find systems of sharing and credit that lie outside mainstream systems of economics. We need to learn what is happening on the margins. The ZacTax campaign seeks a just taxation and looks to the margins of life to do this,” said Philip Vinod Peacock, executive for justice and witness of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

“The point is: the Earth belongs to God, and we are simply stewards. We believe that economic policies should foster

sustainability,” said Mandla Mbongeni Hadebe, of the Economic Justice Network of FOCCISA.

“There should be something that we’re all gaining from the extraction of our resources. Hundreds of millions of dollars are lost each year by mining companies’ avoidance and evasions in sub-Saharan Africa,” Hadebe said. “As communities, as churches, as ordinary citizens we must make it our duty to follow the money and know detailed information about mining contracts, including their true costs and benefits. Through the ZacTax campaign I hope we will be able to do this.”

“Tax policies are not gender-neutral—they are biased toward men. In Africa, most of the women work in the informal economy, but they pay taxes in a lot of ways, mostly in consumption taxes,” said Riska Leandre Koopman of the Global Alliance for Tax Justice.

“Our resources need to start working for us. We need to ensure that tax is addressing inequality issues, including gender,” said Francis Kairu of the Tax Justice Network - Africa. “If tax justice will work in our century, it must do one thing: it must address the mismatch of power between developing and developed countries. Even developed countries are concerned about tax issues, such as tax evasion across multiple countries.”

“Just imagine if the government can counter these illicit financial flows and channel them into other areas,” said M. Ganief Hendricks, a member of the South African Parliament.

“These are global challenges that need global solutions. We are in this together. It is time to ask the faith movement to come in and amplify the voices [that are promoting fair taxation],” said Silje Ander of Norwegian Church Aid.

“This is one of the strengths that we have, working with our partners,” noted Najla Kassab, WCRC president.

The ZacTax Campaign is a part of the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) initiative promoted by the Council for World Mission, Lutheran World Federation, WCRC, World Methodist Council, and World Council of Churches. Funding for it comes from *Otto per Mille*.



Kassab apela a una renovación del compromiso

“**C**omo comunión, hemos comprometido nuestra alianza con quienes se enfrentan a la injusticia”, expresó la presidenta Najla Kassab durante la primera reunión presencial del Comité Ejecutivo desde el año 2019.

Refiriéndose al lema de la reunión - "Alianza en la Misión de Dios"- dijo que "habla de una alianza que Dios ha establecido con su pueblo, y resulta alentador ver que esa alianza con Dios se expresa con claridad en la vida de las personas aquí en la tierra."

Citando Oseas 2:18, el texto del cual se tomó el lema, Kassab manifestó que "el texto habla del compromiso, no por un tiempo limitado, sino del compromiso de un Dios que pactó con su pueblo y que nos promete un mañana mejor que traerá seguridad, justicia y shalom para todos y todas. Esto nos anima a estar en alianza con quienes sufren, se enfrentan a la pobreza y luchan por vivir con dignidad."

"El lema señala una espiritualidad que trabaja para alcanzar el cambio, donde nuestros compromisos nos mueven a la acción. A menos que nuestra espiritualidad se encuentre con la lucha de la gente en su vida cotidiana, en su dolor, nos convertimos en una comunión poética en la que hablamos y nos expresamos con palabras bonitas, pero en la que no ayudamos a la gente a avanzar hacia una justicia vivida", prosiguió.

Kassab enfatizó que "más allá de todos los desafíos a los que nos enfrentamos, vemos que la Comunión está viva en sus programas, donde hay una gran cooperación con otras contrapartes y un valioso compromiso financiero para la acción programática. Esto refleja la confianza que hemos construido con relación al desarrollo de las actividades programáticas".



// El Comité Ejecutivo se reunió en Sudáfrica. //

Sin embargo, continuó diciendo, "tenemos el desafío de reavivar el espíritu de 'responsabilidad y compromiso financiero' de nuestras iglesias hacia la Comunión. El pago de las cuotas de afiliación es una firme declaración de pertenencia y de fortalecimiento de la Comunión. Es una relación de alianza tanto en tiempos buenos como en tiempo complejos que hacemos nuestra al unirnos a la Comunión".

Kassab también señaló la importancia de trabajar con y a través de las regiones para llegar a las iglesias miembro, al expresar que: "alentar el trabajo en las regiones está en el corazón de una Comunión fuerte. La fortaleza de la Comunión no se centra en la oficina global, a pesar del personal capaz que está totalmente comprometido con la tarea de la Comunión; no obstante, potenciar el trabajo en las regiones va de la mano con la tarea de la Comunión a nivel global."

"La crisis del COVID nos ha impactado a todos y a todas. Recibimos el llamado a un liderazgo valiente en el que podamos darnos esperanza mutuamente para inspirar, conjunta y abiertamente, desde la esperanza", dijo.

Kassab concluyó afirmando que "el quebrantamiento no tendrá la última

palabra; nuestros desafíos nos guiarán a una realidad mejor que es aún más hermosa. No ocultaremos el dolor, sino que trabajaremos de manera conjunta para crear una nueva realidad. Esta nueva realidad se hace concreta a partir del trabajo de la Comunión a nivel local y global. ¿Cómo podemos trabajar conjuntamente en una relación de confianza que nos permita

» **Elquebrantamiento no tendrá la última palabra; nuestros desafíos nos guiarán a una realidad mejor que es aún más hermosa.** «

enriquecernos y vivir en un espíritu comunitario que inspire esperanza?"

El Comité Ejecutivo de la CMIR se reunió del 20 al 24 de mayo de 2023 en el Centro de Conferencias Mannah de Johannesburgo, Sudáfrica, junto con las iglesias miembros de Sudáfrica, que amablemente actuaron como anfitrionas.

Acting General Secretary to be sought

After nearly two years of collective leadership by the WCRC executive secretaries through the Collegial General Secretariat (CGS), the WCRC Executive Committee has decided to appoint an acting general secretary to serve through the 2025 General Council.

The decision came after a select committee tasked with exploring sustainability, leadership, and engagement issues recommended the change. While noting with appreciation the work done by the CGS, the committee concluded it was time “to enhance management, accountability, and capacity at all levels.”

“The office was able to run with good programmes under the leadership of the CGS. New programmes were engaged in, funds were raised for them, and relationships with member churches strengthened,” the report from the committee stated. “It is appreciated what the CGS and the executive staff who constitute the CGS have done. They did this literally working 150%. They had their programmes and operations which they were fully doing and in addition, had the general secretary’s responsibilities.”

President Najla Kassab agreed. The CGS “has helped the Communion face the challenge of leading the Communion in the absence of a general secretary, empowered the programme work at the Communion, and created a collegial spirit of sharing responsibilities,” she said in her address to the Executive Committee.

The select committee has evaluated “the leadership model that will help us discern how we will move forward in leading the Communion to the 2025 General Council,” Kassab said.



// Vice-President Lisa Vander Wal listens to President Najla Kassab at the Executive Committee meeting. //

After discernment and discussion, the Executive acted on a recommendation from the committee and agreed to appoint an acting general secretary to guide the Communion through the Council.

A special committee has been named to “recommend through interview” a candidate. All four executive secretaries will be interviewed for the position, along with invited “veteran church leaders with full familiarity with the work of WCRC and with proven success in leading organizations, raising funds, and supervising a multicultural team.”

Once a candidate is selected, the Executive Committee will meet in an extraordinary virtual meeting to vote on the nominee. At that same meeting, the Officers’ Committee will bring a

proposal “to ensure communications continues upon the completion of the current communications executive’s term in 2024.”

The CGS will continue to fulfil its responsibilities until the acting general secretary takes office.

Planning for 2025 General Council accelerates

Plans and preparations for the 2025 General Council took significant strides with a joint meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand, between the General Council Planning Committee and General Council Worship Committee.

The Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) will be hosting the Council with strong support and participation from other World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) members in Asia.

Prior to the meeting in Chiang Mai, representatives of the Planning Committee made a courtesy visit to the officers of the CCT in Bangkok. “The CCT looks forward to welcoming the Communion to Thailand for the General Council,” said Boonratna Buayen, the moderator of the CCT. “It will be important for the global church to see the long history of Christianity in Asia and the ministry we do as a minority religion.”

The Council will meet under the theme “Persevere in Your Witness,” based on Hebrews 12:1. Morning devotions at

the meeting were based on the theme, including one by Karen Georgia Thompson, general minister and president of the United Church of Christ and a member of the Planning Committee.

“Persevere in your witness is a call to discipleship. It is a call to be change makers. It is a call to be justice seekers and way makers. We are called to seek justice in the church and in society. This is a call that requires we have our eyes open and paying attention to what we see around us,” she said.

Besides joint planning discussions, designed to ensure both the theme and worship are interwoven throughout the Council, members of the two committees visited potential sites for the Council, along with hotel possibilities and properties owned and operated by the CCT Foundation.

“It was very important to bring together both groups here, to allow us to have in-depth discussions in the place where the Council will take place,” said Dario Barolin, moderator

of the Planning Committee. “We are very excited about the developing plans and the opportunity to gather the Communion together again.”

The Council will be held in Chiang Mai in October of 2025. It is anticipated that a formal announcement of and invitations to the General Council will be sent to member churches soon.

On the Sunday of the meetings, the groups worshiped with the First Church of Chiang Mai, which was begun by Presbyterian missionaries from the United States in 1878.

The General Council is the highest governance body of the WCRC and typically meets every seven years. The last meeting was in Leipzig, Germany, in 2017, with the next Council postponed a year due to the COVID pandemic.

The planning meetings were held 29 April – 3 May 2023.



Les campagnes de défense des droits prennent forme en Afrique

Le projet GRAPE de la CMER a franchi une nouvelle étape importante lors de la première réunion en face à face des équipes de défense des droits à Windhoek, en Namibie, au mois de mars.

GRAPE (*Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement*) est un projet qui cherche à répondre à l'énormité et à la complexité de la situation économique injuste ajoutée à la crise climatique en développant des réseaux de défense des droits au sein de l'Église et de la société civile.

« Le programme cherche à mobiliser l'Église et les organisations pour qu'elles s'engagent face à certaines des questions sociales et économiques auxquelles sont confrontées nos communautés en Afrique. Alors que nous sommes tentés de commencer par la colère face à nos défis sociétaux, le plaidoyer pour la justice doit toujours être associé à des processus pacifiques pour avoir un impact durable », a déclaré le participant Kevin Muriithi, du Kenya.

« La démarche des campagnes de défense des droits de GRAPE consiste à suivre un processus local, géré par la collectivité, qui analyse, remet en question et modifie de manière significative les structures économiques et sociales actuelles afin d'obtenir des effets tangibles sur la vie des gens », indique un rapport de l'Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI), une organisation de défense des droits basée en Afrique du Sud, qui s'est associée à la CMER dans le cadre de ce projet.

Au cours de la première année de la phase pilote de GRAPE, 10 participants du Kenya et d'Afrique du Sud ont été sélectionnés pour recevoir une formation et concevoir une campagne de défense des droits pour leur pays.



// Les participants du GRAPE planifient leurs projets. //

Au cours des derniers mois, ces participants - qui comptent des membres d'églises, des universitaires et des activistes de la société civile - ont travaillé dans leur propre contexte, formés et guidés par l'EPRI.

Lors d'ateliers virtuels organisés en décembre, chaque équipe a examiné les effets en cascade de la pandémie de COVID, du dérèglement climatique et de l'augmentation du coût de la vie sur la pauvreté, le chômage et la sécurité financière. Elles ont ensuite commencé à identifier les problèmes liés à l'insécurité des revenus et à l'injustice climatique dans leur contexte.

En Namibie, réunies pour la première fois en face à face, les équipes ont partagé leurs premières études de cas et les concepts de leurs campagnes, recevant les commentaires des autres participants, ainsi que des experts de l'EPRI et de Muna Nassar, responsable de la CMER pour la mission et la défense des droits.

Le groupe kenyan se concentre sur l'injustice climatique, en particulier l'inégalité en matière d'eau et le droit à l'eau potable pour chaque citoyen, tandis que les Sud-Africains abordent l'injustice économique par le biais d'une allocation de revenu de base universel.

« Il a été indispensable de se retrouver en personne pour voir comment

fonctionne la dynamique de groupe », a déclaré Muna Nassar. « Un échange sur les contextes était également très important entre les deux groupes dans un endroit qu'ils n'avaient jamais visité auparavant. »

À la fin de la semaine, il y a eu « un sentiment qu'il y a beaucoup de travail à faire », a déclaré Mme Nassar. « Les participants ont ressenti l'urgence et leur capacité d'action en tant qu'individus, mais aussi en tant que membres d'un groupe. Ils ont senti qu'ils ne travaillaient pas seulement en tant qu'individus, chacun contribuant aux campagnes ses propres talents et réseaux, mais le fait d'être ensemble leur a donné la confirmation de ce que l'on peut faire ensemble. »

De nouvelles équipes de cinq personnes dans chaque pays seront sélectionnées dans le courant de l'année pour poursuivre le travail déjà accompli. L'ajout de nouveaux participants chaque année au cours du plan quinquennal permettra de développer les plateformes de manière formelle et informelle, avec les réseaux et les groupes de soutien liés à chaque individu.

GRAPE est rendu possible grâce au soutien de *Brot für die Welt* et d'*Otto per Mille*.

GRAPE campaigns come into focus

The two pilot projects of the Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE) programme of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) took firmer shape at a meeting in South Africa.

On Thursday, 25 May, at 8:30 a.m., the GRAPE participants from Kenya and South Africa found themselves meeting in a dark and chilly conference room in Johannesburg. The lights had just gone out because South Africa has an electricity crisis; load shedding a regular occurrence, which often means no electricity for eight to ten hours a day.

The conference centre had a diesel generator and gas heaters, an individual, albeit expensive and not always reliable solution for a systemic crisis. Until the diesel generator started working, those gathered had an inspiring and warming morning devotion about the theology from the margins with lively songs which warmed their bodies and stimulated their minds.

This was symbolic of the GRAPE programme, which seeks to find practical solutions based on the engagement of churches and partners for the systemic problems of social and economic injustice and the effects of climate breakdown.

The GRAPE Steering Committee along with WCRC executive secretaries Muna Nassar and Hanns Lessing, EPRI course convenors Claudia and Dirk Haarmann, and South African and Kenyan church leaders had come together for two days to evaluate the progress of the GRAPE programme.

Over the last six months, the GRAPE teams in Kenya and South Africa had, with the support of the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI), developed advocacy campaigns for



// GRAPE participants share their project plans. //

the two countries. They shared these details to both the WCRC Executive Committee, meeting in the same venue 20-24 May, and to each other, including analyses of the current situation in the countries and their foci and plans for their advocacy campaigns.

In Kenya, given the dramatic drought and dire water situation caused by the climate crisis, the team wants to work with their government and various national and global stakeholders to ensure that by 2028 each person in Kenya is guaranteed 50 litres of clean and safe drinking water or equivalent cash compensation. Since Kenya is not responsible for the climate breakdown, there is a case to be made for the country to receive financial support from global climate justice, adaptation, and mitigation programmes which can support the achievement of this goal.

In South Africa, given the extreme income inequality, prevailing poverty, and unemployment, the team wants to join forces with the national campaign for the introduction of a universal basic income grant (UBIG) of at least R663 per person monthly to all individuals between the ages of 18 and 59 by 2028. Already during the meeting

in Johannesburg, two active actors in the campaign, the Economic Justice Institute (EJI) and the “PayTheGrant,” gave presentations and input into the concept and campaign in South Africa. The networking with other actors, so vital for advocacy campaigns, started already then and there.

The steering committee members and church leaders, together with the GRAPE team members and EPRI, then mapped out the way forward on how the churches can take concrete steps to engage in these advocacy campaigns; this included planning a timeline for informing their relevant structures, translating information material for congregations into local languages, and strategizing for public events. The next months will further set the stage for the churches to become owners and agents of the advocacy campaigns.

GRAPE is a WCRC project that seeks to address the enormity and complexity of the unjust economic situation coupled with the climate crisis by growing networks of advocates in church and civil society. It is made possible with support from *Brot für die Welt* and *Otto per Mille*.

Weaving the web of peace and justice: a journey for reconciliation in the Korean Peninsula

In an interview with the World Council of Churches (WCC), Hong-Jung Lee—WCC Executive Committee member, former general secretary of National Council of Churches in Korea, and former executive secretary for the Christian Conference of Asia—shared insights into his journey and experiences working towards peace and justice in the Korean Peninsula. Drawing on his extensive experience and involvement in various ecumenical organizations, he shed light on the importance of healing, reconciliation, and the role of churches and Christians in advancing peace in Korea.

Lee's approach to peace and justice in the Korean Peninsula is rooted in the concept of "weaving the web of life for healing and reconciliation." He emphasizes the significance of interdependency and self-emptying as spiritual pillars for sustaining the web of life. By deepening interdependency and overcoming human avarice, he argues that justice and peace become inseparably interconnected, forming the foundation for people's life security.

"Healing and reconciliation are the core of God's economy of life and the spirituality and strategy of God's ministry. Without an ongoing process of healing and reconciliation, there will be no integration between justice and peace, no life-giving and no life-abundant, and therefore no people's life security," said Lee.

Lee highlighted the importance of face-to-face encounters between Christians in North and South Korea. Through international ecumenical meetings and events, including WCC and WCC and peace conferences, Lee has had various opportunities to meet with leaders of the Korean Christian Federation (KCF) and bridge the gap between North and South Korea. "My first encounter with the leaders of the



// Hong-Jung Lee. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC //

Korean Christian Federation happened at the German Kirchentag in Leipzig in 1997. Since then, I was able to encounter the leaders of the KCF at least one or two times every year at the various international ecumenical meetings," shared Lee.

According to Lee, the division of the Korean Peninsula is not the end of the Korean people's history. "If we see a history of the Korean people from a perspective of the whole story of God's salvific action in the world and of what God wants for the world, the division of the Korean Peninsula is not the end of the history of the Korean people," said Lee. He sees the division as a human-induced wilderness, a violation of divine covenant, and a contradiction to God's will. His vision encompasses healing, reconciliation, justice, and peace, leading to a life-abundant reunification of the Korean nation.

Lee advocates for replacing the armistice established in 1953 with a peace agreement. He argued that the armistice perpetuates the division and Cold War mentality, hindering the progress towards peace. He further

highlighted how the geopolitical landscape, with global superpowers redesigning a Neo-Cold War Order, exacerbates tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

"Today in the midst of the multifaceted crises driven by the global climate crisis, the continuing mutations of COVID-19, the US-China hegemonic conflict, the Russo-Ukrainian war, etc., the global superpowers are continuously designing and redesigning a Neo-Cold War Order by separating the world according to alliances and partnerships based on their own interests and values," said Lee. By transitioning from an armistice to a peace agreement, Lee believes the division and cold war system can be unraveled, paving the way for peace and stability.

The importance of the WCC's role in peace-building during the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe was emphasized by Lee. He highlighted the resolution adopted at the assembly and the agreement at the Ecumenical Forum for Korea followed by the assembly, which call for various actions to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula, including global ecumenical prayer movements, peace education, advocacy for human rights, UN initiatives, demilitarization, and nuclear disarmament.

Lee stressed the need for a global ecumenical prayer movement, particularly on the "Sunday of Prayer for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula" before 15 August. He emphasized that prayer, not weapons, is the means for Christians to contribute to peace. He also proposed enhancing peace education and establishing a civilian alliance of peace diplomacy to analyze anti-peace realities, advocate for policy changes, and create platforms for dialogue among the youth.

Lee urged the governments of both North and South Korea to prioritize healing and restoration, addressing division-driven injustices and upholding human rights. He advocated for redirecting national budgets towards peaceful coexistence and lifting economic sanctions that violate human rights.

In addition, he called for UN-initiated peace-building efforts based on previous historic peace summits and for halting military drills and cooperation in the region to encourage positive responses from North Korea. Lee proposed mobilizing global civilian power to transform the DMZ into an eco-peace zone and expanding it to encompass the entire Korean Peninsula. He also advocated for a nuclear-free zone.

Lastly, he encourages active participation in the Korean Peace Appeal Campaign, involving WCRC and WCC member churches that were combatant states in the Korean War.

According to Lee, Korean churches play a crucial role in promoting peace on the Korean Peninsula, transcending ideology and cold war divisions. “By constantly affirming and practicing a spiritual-ethical stance which goes beyond the cold war-oriented ideological boundaries, the Korean churches can be an indispensable moving force of leading the two Koreas to a peaceful co-existence,” shared Lee.

Lee concluded that the global ecumenical movement must change its perception of the Korean people, empowering them as active agents in stabilizing tensions caused by divisive

governments. “I believe, with all these positive peace-making efforts, differences must be cherished, disputes resolved by peaceful means, nature respected by showing prudence in handling all living species and natural resources, and all these responsibilities shared multilaterally. In this course, using the Korean Peace Appeal as an entry point, the churches and Christians in the world can organize a local peace-building network weaving the web of life for healing and reconciliation of the Korean Peninsula inter-locally at the global level,” said Lee.

(Article courtesy of the WCC.)



PHOTO BY PAUL JEFFREY

// Hong-Jung Lee participates in a candlelight vigil for peace in the Korean Peninsula on 9 December 2017, in Gwanghwamun Square in Seoul, South Korea. //

La Décennie pour la justice climatique est lancée avec un appel à la recherche d'une éco-spiritualité juste

Un appel à écouter les marginalisés, y compris l'ensemble de la création de Dieu, était au centre d'un webinaire lançant la Décennie pour la justice climatique de la Communion mondiale d'Eglises réformées (CMER).

« Nous considérons que la crise économique et la crise écologique sont liées. Pour trouver des alternatives, il faut apprendre de ceux qui sont marginalisés et de la terre, qui est elle-même marginalisée dans notre système actuel », a déclaré Philip Vinod Peacock, responsable de la justice et du témoignage au sein de la CMER.

Helen Chukka, professeur adjoint de Bible hébraïque au Wartburg Seminary, a axé sa présentation sur le livre de Job : « Job exhorte ses amis - et nous aussi - à tirer des leçons à la fois de lui-même et des créatures de la terre. Job insiste sur le fait que ces créatures existaient avant les humains, mais qu'elles souffrent aujourd'hui. Il les présente comme des conteurs d'histoires capables de parler en leur propre nom.

Le livre se concentre sur les questions relatives à la justice et à ses manifestations. Il met en lumière les luttes et les souffrances de ceux qui sont en marge de la société, encourageant les lecteurs à réfléchir à leur situation », a-t-elle déclaré, notant en particulier Job 12:7-10 :

« Mais interroge donc les bêtes et elles t'enseigneront, les oiseaux et ils te l'apprendront, ou parle à la terre et elle t'enseignera, et les poissons de la mer te le raconteront: qui ne reconnaît pas, chez eux, la preuve que c'est la main de l'Eternel qui a fait tout cela? Il tient dans sa main l'âme de tout ce qui vit, l'esprit qui anime tout être humain. » (traduction Segond 21)

« La perception dominante du monde aujourd'hui, qui est à l'origine des interprétations dominantes au sein du christianisme, est une vision désordonnée dans laquelle nous considérons les êtres humains comme séparés et supérieurs au reste du monde naturel », a déclaré Jessica Hetherington, écothéologienne et ministre ordonnée de l'Église Unie du Canada.

« Lorsque nous nous considérons comme séparés et supérieurs au monde naturel qui nous entoure, nous nions la réalité scientifique de l'évolution et la façon dont les êtres humains ont émergé dans un réseau incroyablement complexe, interconnecté et interdépendant de tout ce qui existe. En outre, nous nions le fait que Dieu a créé toute la création, par le biais de l'évolution, et que, comme il est

affirmé dans le premier récit de la création, Dieu a dit que c'était bon », a-t-elle déclaré.

« Nous devons développer une éco-spiritualité qui cherche à devenir de plus en plus consciente de la manière dont nous sommes en communauté avec toute la vie et ce qui la soutient ici sur Terre. Nous devons être de plus en plus conscients des dommages que nous avons causés à la

Terre, en particulier à travers la crise climatique, et être capables d'écouter les cris de la communauté de la Terre », a-t-elle déclaré.

« Et nous devons évoluer vers une éco-spiritualité juste qui peut nous ancrer en

Dieu, nous aider à entendre l'appel de Dieu à être disciple dans nos vies, et nous pousser à l'action, afin que nous puissions utiliser tout notre temps, nos talents et nos richesses pour la justice climatique radicale et transformatrice dont nous avons besoin maintenant, aujourd'hui ».

La crise climatique « n'est pas un accident, mais une conséquence de l'incapacité de l'humanité à entendre les gémissements de la création alors qu'elle souhaite contrôler et consommer davantage les ressources terrestres », a déclaré Eve Rebecca Parker, maître de conférences en théologie moderne à l'université de Manchester. « Il s'agit d'une crise d'abus, non seulement de la terre, mais aussi des travailleurs, des enfants et des communautés indigènes. »

« Je voudrais suggérer que ce qu'il nous faut, c'est une réponse théologique politiquement forte, faite de colère et de lamentations », a-t-elle ajouté. « Il s'agit de reconnaître la nécessité d'être en colère et de se lamenter face aux réalités de la crise climatique, parce qu'en tant que chrétiens, on nous avons appris à déplorer les injustices sur terre, tout comme le font les lamentations bibliques, à nommer ce qui



Message from the 2023 Executive Committee Meeting

The Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) met from 20-24 May 2023 in Johannesburg, South Africa, under the theme “Covenanting in God’s Mission.” This theme stands in the light of God’s new covenant with his people as proclaimed in Hosea 2:18-20:

And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me for ever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

We rejoice in meeting in person after only being able to meet virtually these last three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were especially pleased to be accompanied by many of our ecumenical partners. We thank our hosts, the member churches of the WCRC in South Africa, for their gracious hospitality. For us this is not an ordinary location. It is the place where the engagement with the South African churches during the time of apartheid shaped the self-understanding of the Communion as we know it today and gave it its true church identity. It is where the Belhar Confession was birthed, and the continent from which the Accra Confession sprang.

We once more commit ourselves to renew God’s covenant with us, in order to realize God’s mission by demonstrating love for God’s people and creation, seeking justice in God’s world. As Reformed people, we strive to keep reforming according to the Word of God, and therefore we

continue to subject ourselves to a process of discernment—continuous self-examination with the purpose to test the spirits.

During the meeting of the Executive Committee, we took note of specific contexts of violence and injustice in Africa, of war in Sudan, Syria, Palestine, and Ukraine, paying attention to a newly developing, Cold War-oriented, geo-political-economic order in the midst of the USA-China hegemonic struggle which critically affects people’s security in North East Asia. We were sensitized about global movements towards populism, fascism, and authoritarianism in a post-truth reality shaped by social media that threaten democracy.

We also heard from our South African hosts about the continuing challenges they face, including the need for educating the youth; a “brain drain,” of highly skilled people leaving the country; violence, fostered in inequality; and corruption on all levels of the government.

But we were inspired by a visit to Constitution Hill where, on the one hand, we saw the inhuman conditions prisoners were subjected to during the apartheid regimes and on the other hand, saw the commitment South Africans have made to equality through their Constitutional Court.

We were further inspired by presentations from the GRAPE—Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement—participants of Kenya and South Africa, who demonstrated both the need for and the power of advocating for justice.

We therefore call on our member churches to foster a just communion, and we call for the full and just participation of all those who have been excluded from our tables.

We call for those who have had their dignity stolen from them, who have been rejected and demeaned, to be at the centre of our spaces and our conversations.

We call on our member churches to covenant for justice and to work to remove inequalities, to dismantle patriarchy, and to stop the systemic exploitation of people and the earth.

We call on our member churches to adopt and support the calls of the Zacchaeus Tax campaign for tax justice and reparations which we relaunched in Africa during our gathering.

We call on our Communion members to proclaim and demonstrate how the gospel of Jesus Christ transforms us when we engage with God’s mission in contexts of crisis, giving hope to the world by humble and honest discernment, by fearless witness, and by boldly practicing justice.

With this spirit the Executive Committee invites our member churches to move together towards the 2025 General Council in Thailand under the theme “Persevere in your witness,” on a common journey for renewing our covenant in God’s mission.

As 2 Corinthians 4:8-11 states: “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our bodies.”

Mensaje del Comité Ejecutivo 2023

El Comité Ejecutivo de la Comunión Mundial de Iglesias Reformadas (CMIR) estuvo reunido del 20 al 24 de mayo de 2023 en Johannesburgo, Sudáfrica, bajo el lema "Alianza en la Misión de Dios". Este lema se ubica a la luz del nuevo pacto de Dios con su pueblo, anunciado en Oseas 2:18-20 (NVI):

Aquel día haré en tu favor un pacto
con los animales del campo,
con las aves de los cielos
y con los reptiles de la tierra.
Eliminaré del país arcos, espadas y guerra,
para que todos duerman seguros.
Yo te haré mi esposa para siempre,
y te daré como dote el derecho y la justicia,
el amor y la compasión.
Te daré como dote mi fidelidad,
y entonces conocerás al Señor.

Reunirnos presencialmente luego de hacerlo sólo virtualmente estos tres últimos años por causa de la pandemia COVID-19 nos llena de alegría. Nos complace especialmente hacerlo en compañía de muchas de nuestras contrapartes ecuménicas. Agradecemos a quienes nos reciben, las iglesias miembros de la CMIR de Sudáfrica, por su amable hospitalidad. Para nosotros y nosotras, éste no es un lugar cualquiera. Es el lugar donde el compromiso con las iglesias sudafricanas durante la época del apartheid modeló la autocomprensión de la Comunión tal como la conocemos hoy y le dio su verdadera identidad eclesial. Es donde surgió la Confesión de Belhar, y el continente en el que nació la Confesión de Accra.

Una vez más nos comprometemos a renovar la alianza de Dios con nosotros y nosotras, para asumir la misión de Dios al demostrar amor por el pueblo de Dios y por la creación,

buscando la justicia en el mundo de Dios. Como

pueblo reformado, nos esforzamos por seguir reformándonos según la

Palabra de Dios, y por ello

seguimos sometiéndonos

a un proceso de

discernimiento -un

autoexamen

continuo con el

propósito de

poner a

prueba los

espíritus.

En el

marco de

» Una vez más nos
comprometemos a
renovar la alianza
de Dios con nosotros
y nosotras... «

la reunión del Comité Ejecutivo, tomamos nota de los contextos específicos de violencia e injusticia en África, de la guerra en Sudán, Siria, Palestina y Ucrania, prestando atención a un nuevo orden geopolítico-económico orientado a la Guerra Fría en medio de la lucha hegemónica entre EE.UU. y China, que afecta críticamente a la seguridad de las personas en el noreste de Asia. Fuimos sensibilizados sobre los movimientos globales hacia el populismo, el fascismo y el autoritarismo en una realidad de posverdad, concebida desde los medios sociales, que amenazan la democracia.

También escuchamos a nuestros anfitriones sudafricanos hablar de los continuos desafíos que enfrentan, como la necesidad de educar a la juventud; la "fuga de cerebros", de personas altamente calificadas que abandonan el país; la violencia, impulsada por la desigualdad; y la corrupción en todos los niveles del gobierno.

A su vez, nos inspiró la visita a *Constitution Hill*, donde, por un lado, vimos las condiciones inhumanas a las que se sometía a las personas prisioneras durante los regímenes del apartheid y, por otro, comprobamos el compromiso que los sudafricanos y las sudafricanas han adquirido con la igualdad a través de su Tribunal Constitucional.

También nos inspiraron las presentaciones de quienes participaron de GRAPE (siglas en inglés para la Plataforma Reformada Global de Incidencia para el Compromiso), tanto en Kenia como en Sudáfrica, que demostraron tanto la necesidad como el poder de la incidencia por la justicia.

Por todo esto, convocamos a nuestras iglesias miembros para que fomenten una comunión justa, y pedimos la participación plena y justa de todas aquellas personas que han sido excluidas de nuestras mesas.

Pedimos que aquellas a quienes se les ha robado su dignidad, que han sido rechazadas y degradadas, sean ubicadas en el centro de nuestros espacios y de nuestras conversaciones.

Convocamos a nuestras iglesias miembros a realizar un pacto por la justicia y a que trabajen para eliminar las desigualdades, para dismantelar el patriarcado y para poner fin a la explotación sistémica de las personas y de la tierra.

Convocamos a nuestras iglesias miembro a adoptar y a apoyan los llamamientos de la campaña tributaria Zaqueo por la justicia fiscal y las reparaciones que relanzamos en África durante nuestro encuentro.

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Message de la réunion du Comité exécutif 2023

Le Comité exécutif de la Communion mondiale d'Églises réformées (CMER) s'est réuni du 20 au 24 mai 2023 à Johannesburg, en Afrique du Sud, sur le thème « Faire alliance dans la mission de Dieu ». Ce thème s'inscrit dans la perspective de la nouvelle alliance de Dieu avec son peuple, telle qu'elle est proclamée dans Osée 2:20-22:

« Ce jour-là, je conclurai pour eux une alliance avec les bêtes sauvages, les oiseaux du ciel et les reptiles de la terre; je briserai dans le pays l'arc, l'épée et la guerre, et je les ferai reposer en sécurité. Je te fiancerai à moi pour toujours. Je te fiancerai à moi par la justice, la droiture, la bonté et la compassion, je te fiancerai à moi par la fidélité, et tu connaîtras l'Éternel. » (traduction Segond 21)

Nous nous réjouissons de nous rencontrer en personne après n'avoir pu le faire que virtuellement ces trois dernières années à cause de la pandémie de COVID-19. Nous avons été particulièrement heureux d'être accompagnés par un grand nombre de nos partenaires œcuméniques. Nous remercions nos hôtes, les Églises membres de la CMER en Afrique du Sud, pour leur généreuse hospitalité. Pour nous, il ne s'agit pas d'un lieu ordinaire. C'est le lieu où l'engagement avec les Églises sud-africaines à l'époque de l'apartheid a formé la perception de soi de la Communion telle que nous la connaissons aujourd'hui et lui a donné sa véritable identité ecclésiale. C'est là qu'est née la Confession de Belhar et c'est du continent africain qu'est venue la Confession d'Accra.

Nous nous engageons une fois de plus à renouveler l'alliance de Dieu avec nous, afin de réaliser la mission de Dieu en démontrant notre amour pour le peuple et la création de Dieu, et en recherchant la justice dans le monde

de Dieu. En tant que réformés, nous nous efforçons de continuer à nous réformer selon la Parole de Dieu, et nous continuons donc à nous soumettre à un processus de discernement - un examen continu de nous-mêmes dans le but d'examiner les esprits.

Au cours de la réunion du Comité exécutif, nous avons pris note des contextes spécifiques de violence et d'injustice en Afrique, de la guerre au Soudan, en Syrie, en Palestine et en Ukraine, en prêtant attention à un nouvel ordre géo-politico-économique orienté vers la guerre froide au milieu de la lutte hégémonique entre les États-Unis et la Chine, qui affecte de manière décisive la sécurité des peuples de l'Asie du Nord-Est. Nous avons été sensibilisés aux mouvements mondiaux vers le populisme, le fascisme et l'autoritarisme dans une réalité de post-vérité façonnée par les médias sociaux qui menacent la démocratie.

Nos hôtes sud-africains nous ont également fait part des défis permanents auxquels ils sont confrontés, notamment la nécessité d'éduquer les jeunes, la "fuite des cerveaux", c'est-à-dire des personnes hautement qualifiées qui quittent le pays, la violence, favorisée par l'inégalité, et la corruption à tous les niveaux du gouvernement.

Mais nous avons été inspirés par une visite à Constitution Hill où, d'une part, nous avons vu les conditions

inhumaines auxquelles les prisonniers étaient soumis pendant les régimes de l'apartheid et, d'autre part, nous avons vu l'engagement des Sud-Africains en faveur de l'égalité par l'intermédiaire de leur Cour constitutionnelle.

Nous avons également été inspirés par les présentations des participants du GRAPE (*Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement*) du

Kenya et d'Afrique du Sud, qui ont démontré à la fois la nécessité et la puissance de la défense de la justice.

Nous appelons donc nos Églises membres à favoriser une communion juste, et nous appelons à la participation pleine et juste de tous ceux qui ont été exclus de nos tables.

Nous demandons que les personnes dont la dignité a été dérobée, qui ont été rejetées et rabaissées, soient au centre de nos espaces et de nos conversations.

Nous appelons nos Églises membres à s'engager pour la justice et à travailler à la suppression des inégalités, au démantèlement du patriarcat et à l'arrêt de l'exploitation systémique des personnes et de la terre.

Nous demandons à nos Églises membres d'adopter et de soutenir les revendications de la campagne Zachée pour la justice fiscale et les réparations, que nous avons relancée en Afrique au cours de notre rassemblement.

Nous appelons les membres de notre Communion à proclamer et à

» Nous appelons nos Églises membres à s'engager pour la justice et à travailler à la suppression des inégalités, au démantèlement du patriarcat et à l'arrêt de l'exploitation systémique des personnes et de la terre. «

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Botschaft von der Tagung des Exekutivausschusses 2023

Der Exekutivausschuss der Weltgemeinschaft Reformierter Kirchen (WGRK) tagte vom 20. bis 24. Mai 2023 in Johannesburg, Südafrika, unter dem Thema „Der Bündnispartner in Gottes Mission“. Dieses Thema steht im Lichte des neuen Bundes Gottes mit seinem Volk, wie er in Hosea 2, 20-22 verkündet wird:

„Und an jenem Tag schließe ich einen Bund mit ihnen,
mit den Tieren des Feldes und mit den Vögeln des Himmels
und mit den Kriechtieren auf dem Erdboden.

Und Bogen und Schwert und Krieg werde ich zerbrechen im Land,
und in Sicherheit lasse ich sie schlafen.
Dann mache ich dich für immer zu meiner Verlobten,
und ich mache dich zu meiner Verlobten für Recht und Gerechtigkeit
als Brautpreis und für Gnade und Erbarmen.

Und ich mache dich zu meiner Verlobten für Treue als Brautpreis,
und du wirst den Herrn erkennen“.
(Zürcher Übersetzung)

Wir freuen uns, dass wir uns persönlich treffen konnten, nachdem wir in den letzten drei Jahren aufgrund der COVID-19-Pandemie nur virtuell zusammenkommen konnten. Wir haben uns besonders gefreut, von vielen unserer ökumenischen Partner begleitet zu werden. Wir danken unseren Gastgebern, den Mitgliedskirchen der WGRK in Südafrika, für ihre freundliche Gastfreundschaft. Für uns ist dies kein gewöhnlicher Ort. Es ist der Ort, an dem die Verbindung mit den südafrikanischen Kirchen während der Zeit der Apartheid das Selbstverständnis der Gemeinschaft, wie wir sie heute kennen, geprägt und ihr ihre wahre kirchliche Identität

gegeben hat. Es ist der Ort, an dem das Belhar-Bekenntnis entstanden ist, und der Kontinent, aus dem das Bekenntnis von Accra hervorgegangen ist.

Wir verpflichten uns erneut, den Bund Gottes mit uns zu erneuern, um Gottes Mission zu verwirklichen, indem wir Liebe für Gottes Volk und seine Schöpfung zeigen und uns um Gerechtigkeit in Gottes Welt bemühen. Als Reformierte sind wir bestrebt, uns ständig nach dem Wort Gottes zu reformieren, und deshalb unterziehen wir uns weiterhin einem Prozess der Abwägung - einer ständigen Selbstbefragung mit dem Ziel, die Geister zu prüfen.

Während der Sitzung des Exekutivausschusses nahmen wir die konkreten Formen von Gewalt und Ungerechtigkeit in Afrika, die Kriege im Sudan, in Syrien, in Palästina und in der Ukraine zur Kenntnis und achteten auf eine sich neu entwickelnde, am Kalten Krieg orientierte geopolitisch-ökonomische Ordnung inmitten des Hegemonialstreits zwischen den USA und China, die die Sicherheit der Menschen in Nordostasien kritisch beeinflusst. Wir wurden für globale Bewegungen in Richtung Populismus, Faschismus und Autoritarismus in einer von den sozialen Medien geprägten postfaktischen Realität sensibilisiert, die die Demokratie bedrohen.

Wir erfuhren von unseren südafrikanischen Gastgebern auch von den anhaltenden Herausforderungen, mit denen sie konfrontiert sind, darunter die Notwendigkeit, die Jugend auszubilden, die Abwanderung hochqualifizierter Menschen, die Gewalt, die durch Ungleichheit gefördert wird, und die Korruption auf allen Ebenen der Regierung.

Inspiziert wurden wir jedoch von einem Besuch auf dem Constitution Hill, wo wir einerseits die unmenschlichen Bedingungen sahen, denen Gefangene während des Apartheidregimes ausgesetzt waren, und andererseits das Engagement der Südafrikaner für die Gleichberechtigung durch ihr Verfassungsgericht sahen.

Darüber hinaus wurden wir durch die Vorträge der GRAPE-Teilnehmer aus Kenia und Südafrika (*Global Reformed*

» **Wir rufen unsere
Gemeinschaftsmitglieder auf,
zuverkündigen und zu
demonstrieren, wie das
Evangelium Jesu Christi
unverwandelt.** «

Advocacy Platforms for Engagement) inspiriert, die sowohl die Notwendigkeit als auch die Stärke des Eintretens für Gerechtigkeit deutlich machten.

Wir rufen daher unsere Mitgliedskirchen auf, eine gerechte Gemeinschaft zu fördern, und wir fordern die volle und gerechte Beteiligung aller, die von unseren Tischen ferngehalten worden sind.

Wir fordern, dass diejenigen, denen ihre Würde geraubt wurde, die abgelehnt und erniedrigt wurden, im Mittelpunkt unserer Räume und unserer Gespräche stehen.

Wir rufen unsere Mitgliedskirchen auf, ein Bündnis für Gerechtigkeit zu

Christians pray for peace in a broken world

schließen und sich für die Beseitigung von Ungleichheiten, den Abbau des Patriarchats und die Beendigung der systemischen Ausbeutung von Menschen und der Erde einzusetzen.

Wir rufen unsere Mitgliedskirchen auf, sich die Forderungen der Zachäus-Steuer-Kampagne für Steuergerechtigkeit und Wiedergutmachung zu eigen zu machen und zu unterstützen, die wir während unserer Versammlung in Afrika wiederbelebt haben.

Wir rufen unsere Gemeinschaftsmitglieder auf, zu verkündigen und zu demonstrieren, wie das Evangelium Jesu Christi uns verwandelt, wenn wir uns in Krisensituationen auf Gottes Mission einlassen und der Welt durch demütige und ehrliche Abwägung, durch furchtloses Zeugnis und durch mutiges Eintreten für Gerechtigkeit Hoffnung geben.

In diesem Geist lädt der Exekutivausschuss unsere Mitgliedskirchen ein, sich gemeinsam auf die Vollversammlung 2025 in Thailand zuzubewegen, die unter dem Motto „Beharrlich Zeugnis ablegen“ steht, auf einer gemeinsamen Wegstrecke der Erneuerung unseres Bündnisses in Gottes Mission.

Wie es in 2. Korinther 4,8-11 heißt: „Wir sind von allen Seiten bedrängt, aber nicht zerschlagen; verwirrt, aber nicht verzweifelt; verfolgt, aber nicht verlassen; niedergeschlagen, aber nicht vernichtet. Wir tragen allezeit den Tod Jesu an unserem Leib, damit auch das Leben Jesu an unserem Leib offenbar werde.“

During a Global Peace Prayer on 22 March, Christians across the world drew together to pray for peace in a broken world and to listen to voices from people suffering in Ukraine and other conflict-ridden areas.

Hanns Lessing, acting general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, opened the prayer by urging a recommitment to God's covenant with all creation. "In our damaged histories, God, redeem us from our past, in our willing acts of conflict, Lord lead us to seek peace," he prayed.

Mikie Roberts, World Council of Churches programme executive for spiritual life, implored for mercy. "Let us thirst for the right actions that will achieve peace," he said.

Voices from Ukraine offered a sense of immediacy and urgency in striving for peace.

Yulia Starodubet, a minister from the Methodist Church of Ukraine, described the many emotions those in Ukraine have felt since the Russian invasion: anger, sadness, depression. "But God helped us in this situation and changed our emotions to hope, desire to stay strong, and resilience," she said. "We make it because the world is on our side."

Starodubet expressed gratitude for global solidarity and for persistent prayer. "Your love and care helps us continue to hope and stay strong," she said.

Oleksii Yudit, a Mennonite from Ukraine, also urged persistent prayer. "Please pray for our needs. Please pray for our people. Please pray about our soldiers and about our country," he said.

Igor Bandura, from the All-Ukrainian Union of Association of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, described the

great needs of the people in Ukraine. "People are in terrible condition," he said. "Most of all, they need God's love surrounding them. So please, stay with us, during the time of the war. Please pray for the victory."

Yulilya Kominko, from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, described how the ongoing war has caused a crisis of faith for many. "I constantly hear: 'My faith is wavering.' Let us pray that we remain faithful to God, to thank him even in suffering."

In a message, Cesar Garcia, general secretary of the Mennonite World Conference, reflected on the state of the world and how vital prayer is, particularly when accompanied by work for peace. "The war in Ukraine has entered its second year," he said, also noting that simultaneously, escalating violence in Palestine, continuing military exercises threatening peace on the Korean Peninsula, state violence in Myanmar, a fragile situation in Ethiopia, and war in several other parts of the world threaten peace. "It seems our world is broken—broken!"

Katerina Pekridou, executive secretary for Theological Dialogue with the Conference of European Churches, prayed for God to shake the foundations of selfish human plans. "Open the hearts of those in the west, caught as we are in the web of our own economic self interests," she said. "Preserve us from the arbitrariness of the powerful of this world and lead them to recognize their limits, that they may find ways toward peace, and put an end to the loss of life."

In a closing blessing Bishop Rosemarie Wenner said: "Let us go as people of hope, strengthened through the love of God so that we may be witnesses of peace and hope and love to many others."

2023 GIT: un autre monde est possible



L'Institut mondial de théologie 2023 (GIT) a rassemblé aux Fidji plus de trois douzaines de personnes parlant deux douzaines de langues et venant de près de 20 pays différents, pour une expérience théologique, éducative et culturelle intensive sur le thème « Libérer la parole dans un monde instable ».

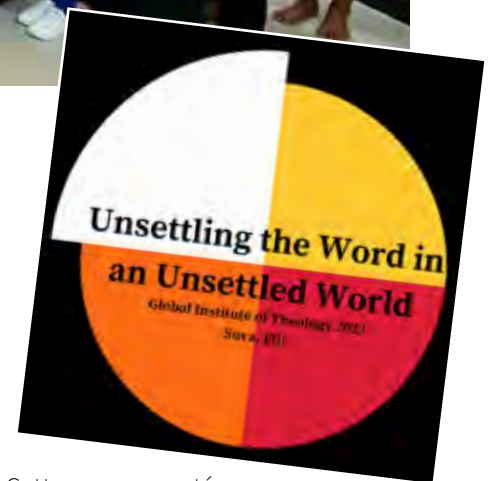
Le GIT de la Communion mondiale d'Églises réformées (CMER) nourrit et encourage le travail de jeunes théologiens et spécialistes du monde entier par le biais d'un programme académique intensif de courte durée conçu pour donner aux participants l'occasion d'apprendre, d'enseigner et de faire de la théologie d'une manière intercontextuelle et œcuménique, en reliant la théologie du niveau local au niveau régional et au niveau mondial.

« Le GIT est en effet une expérience unique, qui rend humble et stimule, qui nous permet d'apprendre, de désapprendre et de réapprendre les questions théologiques. Je suis vraiment béni d'y avoir participé », a déclaré Asinate Mataitoga, un étudiant fidjien.

Le GIT 2023 est le premier à se tenir dans la région du Pacifique, plus

précisément au Pacific Theological College, à Suva, aux Fidji. Au cours de la première semaine, tous les participants ont fait l'expérience de l'incroyable hospitalité de la communauté de Bau, et de nombreux étudiants ont déclaré qu'il n'y avait pas de mots pour décrire ce qu'ils avaient reçu.

Ce GIT est aussi particulièrement centré sur la prédication, chaque étudiant apportant un message au groupe durant le temps où ils sont ensemble. « Ce fut une expérience enrichissante, inspirante, puissante, parfois très intense et angoissante, mais toutes les prédications ont été profondément personnelles », a déclaré HyeRan Kim-Cragg, doyenne des étudiants du GIT. « Chaque étudiant a abordé un sujet qui lui tenait à cœur, qu'il s'agisse de la violence domestique à caractère sexiste, du racisme, de la crise climatique, de l'exploitation des ressources minières ou des questions LGBTQ, tout en remettant en question la Parole, la théologie, l'anthropocentrisme et l'androcentrisme. C'est notre désir et notre espoir que ces prédications soient partagées au sein de la Communion et Au-delà. »



« Cette communauté délibérée du GIT 2023 a prouvé qu'un autre monde basé sur l'interdépendance est possible et que nos expériences intimes et délibérées ne seront pas seulement des souvenirs mémorables mais deviendront aussi une source de transformation dans nos propres réalités globales, globales et locales, alors que nous témoignons des luttes et de la résistance des uns et des autres avec Dieu qui est déjà à l'œuvre, très présent et qui guide notre voyage fidèle », a déclaré Philip Vinod Peacock, responsable de la justice et du témoignage à la CMER.

Le GIT est rendu possible grâce au soutien financier des Eglises membres, de Evangelische Mission Weltweit et de la Fondation pour l'aide au Protestantisme Réformé.

Gender justice bolstered with new staff member

The commitment of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) to gender equality within churches has been significantly strengthened by the addition of a new program coordinator for gender justice.

“It is crucial to have women assume leadership positions within churches. This allows for a more comprehensive and inclusive representation of God’s image, breaking free from the notion of God solely as male,” said Min-Woo Oh, an ordained pastor from the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK), who joined the WCRC staff at the beginning of June.

“The position of women as leaders in the church signifies a transformative shift away from the traditional, patriarchal, dominant paradigm and promotes a shift to ‘power with’ instead of ‘power over.’ It tangibly manifests the complete embodiment of God’s world, transcending gender-based inequities,” she said.

“Embracing women’s leadership within the church becomes a point where power and justice intersect. It represents a religious practice of liberation from marginalization and suppression, ultimately leading to the realization of justice that enhances abundant life.”

Oh’s work will focus on five areas:

- **Address Women’s Ordination:**

“One of the primary focuses is to promote the adoption of women’s ordination within the Communion. This involves understanding the unique contexts and challenges faced by the member churches who do not yet ordain women and developing strategic plans tailored to the specific needs of each church,” she said.

- **Advocate for Gender Justice:**

“By promoting gender equality and fairness in decision-making processes, policy development, and overall operations, we can ensure that the WCRC operates in alignment with principles of justice and inclusivity,” she said.

- **Address Emerging Gender Justice Issues:**

“In staying attentive to the evolving challenges faced by women and marginalized genders, we can adapt and formulate new agendas that effectively tackle these issues within the WCRC and its member churches,” she said.

- **Foster Networking and Collaboration:**

“We’ll create a collective platform for knowledge exchange, resource sharing, and collaborative initiatives aimed at advancing gender justice within the

broader ecumenical movement,” she said.

- **Strengthen Solidarity:** “Through actively engaging with and supporting other organizations and individuals working towards gender justice, we can create a unified front and amplify our collective impact,” she said.

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Mensaje del Comité Ejecutivo 2023
Viene de la página 12

Convocamos a la membresía de nuestra Comunión a proclamar y a demostrar cómo el evangelio de Jesucristo nos transforma cuando nos comprometemos con la misión de Dios en contextos de crisis, dando esperanza al mundo por medio a partir de un discernimiento humilde y honesto, a través de un testimonio valiente y practicando audazmente la justicia.

Con este espíritu, el Comité Ejecutivo invita a nuestras iglesias miembros a caminar juntas hacia la Asamblea General del año 2025, en Tailandia, bajo el lema "Persevera en tu testimonio", en un peregrinaje conjunto para renovar nuestra alianza en la misión de Dios.

Tal como expresa 2° Corintios 4:8-10: "Nos vemos atribulados en todo, pero no abatidos; perplejos, pero no desesperados; perseguidos, pero no abandonados; derribados, pero no destruidos. Dondequiera que vamos, siempre llevamos en nuestro cuerpo la muerte de Jesús, para que también su vida se manifieste en nuestro cuerpo."

Consultation on food crisis unfolds deep theological meanings

The World Council of Churches (WCC) cohosted an online consultation on 12 April to address the pressing issue of the converging food and debt crises. The event invited churches, ecumenical partners, and civil society allies to come together to examine the intersections and roots of these crises, and to seek collective guidance on possible joint responses.

Opening the consultation, Kenneth Mtata, WCC program director for public witness and diakonia, welcomed international experts on food, and voices from different religions and parts of the world.

"The multifaceted and intersectional crisis between food and debt is something that has been unfolding over a long period of time and can be traced back to almost six decades," he said.

To unpack this complexity, the consultation welcomed two panels, the first covering the latest findings on the food and debt crisis, and the second covering how churches respond.

The consultation then received inputs from, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, North America, and Europe.

Speakers endeavored to develop a clear understanding of the key interlinked developments of food insecurity, debt, and bank collapse, and to understand how faith communities can continue to be informed and strengthened in the face of these challenges.

Closing the consultation, Philip Vinod Peacock, WCRC executive for justice and witness, reflected that the question on the minds of the speakers was: What or is there even a theology of food?



IMAGE BY MARCELO SCHNEIDER/WCC.

"What we do know from our own contexts and situations is that food is not just about providing nourishment to our bodies so that we can sustain ourselves for another day—but it also forms how societies themselves are organized," he said. "For us, as Christians, food has a very deep theological meaning."

In addition to the WCC, the consultation was hosted by the All Africa Conference of Churches, Council for World Mission, FIAN International, Lutheran World Federation, Organisation of African Instituted Churches, WCRC, and World Methodist Council.

(Article courtesy of WCC.)

Communion mourns passing of Omega Bula

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) joins its ecumenical siblings around the world in mourning the passing of Omega Chilufya Bula, who passed away on 31 January from heart complications after a long battle with cancer.

“Omega leaves an incomparable legacy of ecumenical leadership in the struggle for racial, gender, economic, and social justice in her home country of Zambia, across the African continent, in The United Church of Canada (UCC), and globally,” said a statement from The UCC, with which she served for many years.

While working for The UCC, Bula was also very active with both the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and WCRC. She was an active contributor to the gender justice and economic/ecoological justice work, including serving as a consultant at the 24th General Council in Accra, Ghana, in 2004.

“Omega Chilufya Bula was a special gift to the ecumenical movement,” said Setri Nyomi, former general secretary of both WARC and WCRC. “I have known her since we were both colleagues as executive staff of the All Africa Conference of Churches in the 1990s as a talented woman committed to facilitating how churches will be more faithful in being God’s agents of transformation—exposing injustice and living out God’s value for justice in the world. She did this remarkably wherever she has served in Zambia, Kenya, and Canada.”

“Having Omega on board in any projects, you knew that you had a colleague, a friend, and a partner that you could always trust,” said Yueh-Wen Lu, WCRC vice-president 2010-2017. “Having her on board meant outcomes

would be far better than we expected. Having her in the Communion was a blessing and grace from God.”

“Without a doubt, her physical presence, her capacity for discernment, and her loyalty to justice are needed today more than ever. It remains for us to give meaning to her absence by renewing our fidelity to the gospel that inspired her life and that calls us, as the song announces, to ‘give bread to those who hunger and hunger for justice to those who have bread,’” said Dora Arce Valentin, AIPRAL executive secretary and former WCRC executive secretary for justice and partnership.

“Omega was a force to reckon within the ecumenical space and she always pushed her agenda with a lot of grace,” said Veronica Muchiri, a WCRC Executive Committee member.

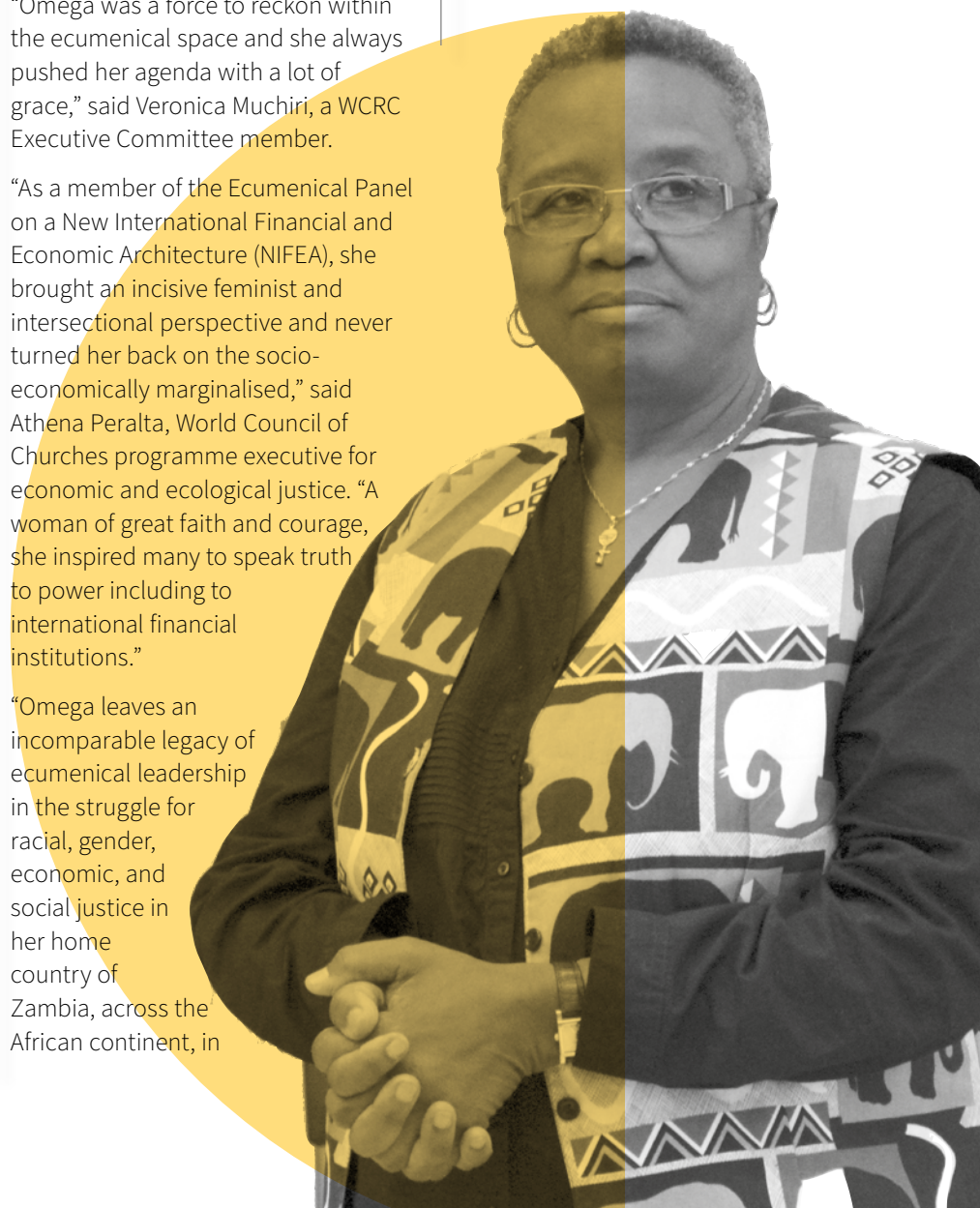
“As a member of the Ecumenical Panel on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEFA), she brought an incisive feminist and intersectional perspective and never turned her back on the socio-economically marginalised,” said Athena Peralta, World Council of Churches programme executive for economic and ecological justice. “A woman of great faith and courage, she inspired many to speak truth to power including to international financial institutions.”

“Omega leaves an incomparable legacy of ecumenical leadership in the struggle for racial, gender, economic, and social justice in her home country of Zambia, across the African continent, in

The United Church of Canada, and globally,” said Jerry Pillay, WCC general secretary and former WCRC president. “The global ecumenical movement has lost one of its greatest leaders, and Omega will be deeply missed.”

Bula served in The UCC’s General Council Offices in the Division of World Outreach as Area Secretary for Southern Africa and Gender Justice, as the first-ever Racial Justice Minister, and as Executive Minister of the former Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations (JGER) and Partners in Mission Units (PIM).

(The WCC contributed to this story.)



Message de la réunion du Comité
Suite de la page 13

démontrer comment l'Évangile de Jésus-Christ nous transforme lorsque nous nous engageons dans la mission de Dieu dans des contextes de crise, en donnant de l'espoir au monde par un discernement humble et honnête, par un témoignage sans crainte et par une pratique audacieuse de la justice.

C'est dans cet esprit que le Comité exécutif invite nos Églises membres à se diriger ensemble vers l'Assemblée Générale de 2025 en Thaïlande, sous le thème « Persévérez dans votre témoignage », dans le cadre d'un cheminement commun visant à renouveler notre alliance dans la mission de Dieu.

Comme le dit 2 Corinthiens 4:8-11 : « Nous sommes pressés de toutes parts, mais non écrasés; inquiets, mais non désespérés; persécutés, mais non abandonnés; abattus, mais non anéantis. Nous portons toujours avec nous dans notre corps l'agonie du [Seigneur] Jésus afin que la vie de Jésus soit aussi manifestée dans notre corps. En effet, nous qui vivons, nous sommes sans cesse livrés à la mort à cause de Jésus afin que la vie de Jésus soit elle aussi révélée dans notre corps mortel » (traduction Segond 21).

Communion calls for cessation of violence in Manipur

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) calls for prayer for the Indigenous communities of Manipur, a state in northeastern India, which have been experiencing violence since early May.

Violence against Indigenous people, who are largely Christian, has created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. Over fifteen churches including those belonging to WCRC member Evangelical Churches Association, have been either burnt or vandalized. Over twenty people have lost their lives in the violence with many others injured.

The violence began during a peaceful march by Indigenous minority groups protesting a call for affirmative action to be extended to the non-Indigenous majority group in the region. India has a system of affirmative action for Indigenous people and those who come from formerly untouchable communities.

The violence spread from the protest march in Churachandpur to neighbouring communities. Besides attacks against churches and residences, students belonging to these communities were targeted in schools and universities. Unfortunately, the violence took on peculiarly religious lines with even churches from the majority community being attacked.

The government responded with a curfew and deployed the Indian Army to the region.

The WCRC calls for an immediate end to the violence and a process of dialogue to resolve the tensions in the area. The Communion called on all people of faith and good will to pray and work for peace in the region.



IMAGE BY LIFE ON EARTH/PAUL JEFFREY.

WCRC calls for peace in Sudan

Noting with grave concern the escalating situation in Sudan in April, the World Communion of Reformed Churches calls for an immediate cessation of the violence and implementation of a just process towards lasting peace.

Acting General Secretary Hanns Lessing called on the Communion to “pray for peace in Sudan and for international agencies to work to find long-lasting solutions for peace in the region.”

According to the United Nations, the violence in Sudan resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people, with over 4,200 wounded. The crisis also sparked a refugee crisis, which caused thousands to cross over the borders into Chad.

According to the BBC, the former prime minister of Sudan, Abdalla Hamdok, warned that the conflict could become worse than those in Syria and Libya, where hundreds of thousands of people died.

The WCRC also called on the Communion to pray for its member church in Sudan, the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan and Sudan.

WCRC calls for prayers for peace in Palestine

Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

—Proverbs 31:9

As violence increased in March, the World Communion of Reformed Churches called on its members and the broader ecumenical movement to pray and work towards peace in Palestine.

Violence escalated in the West Bank with settlers' attacks on Palestinian towns and villages towards the end of 2022. Three months into 2023, the number of Palestinians killed was the highest since the second Intifada. This violence included setting homes and cars on fire, property destruction, and the raiding of villages. In total, 72 Palestinians were killed, while 12 Israeli civilians and one police officer were killed. With the continuation of this cycle of violence, Christians were asked to take theological responsibility for what is happening.

"Israel's settler-colonial project reflected imperial ambitions in which violence would be crucial to its continuation," the WCRC's appeal stated. "We call on the international community to denounce the actions of Israel and to support the Palestinian community in the midst of the injustices that they are suffering. Today we are called in to sharpen our approaches to our theological and political interpretation and define our theology of resistance.

"While the vision for the life and future of both people is gloomy, we continue to work and promote a strong call that stems from the strength of our belief in God, God's righteousness and love for all humanity; we pray and work with the firm hope for the day when both oppressor and oppressed create a new society for all the people of the

land. We call on all people of goodwill to pray and work to promote a culture of life in the face of violence and death."

- Learn more at wrc.ch/justice/palestine



Churches respond to earthquake, call for prayer and support

On 6 February, a severe earthquake struck southern and central Turkey, and northern and western Syria. The death toll hit has exceeded 50,000 people, with more than 121,000 injured, and over a million people left homeless.

WCRC member churches and partners responded with support and calls for prayer, including the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East and National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon which actively provided food, warmth and refuge to the affected people in the region.

Additional aid has come from the United Church of Christ, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, World Renew, and The United Church of Canada, as well as ACT Alliance.

Gender Justice

Continued from page 17

Oh's work builds from the actions taken by the 2017 General Council, which adopted a Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination and directed the Communion to develop a Gender Justice Policy, which its Executive Committee adopted in 2021.

Oh received a Bachelor of Science degree from Keimyung University, both M.Div. and Th.M. (Christian ethics) degrees from Youngnam Theological Seminary and University, and a Ph.D. in systematic theology from Kwazulu-natal University in South Africa with a focus on the intersection of militarization, empire, and eco-feminist theological perspectives. She has served with the Centre for Ecumenical Studies as a researcher and vice director, took part in a mission exchange program with the Saskatchewan Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and is a PCK delegate to the Council for World Mission (CWM).

In fact, it is through CWM's Partners in Mission program that Oh has joined WCRC staff. "CWM plays a vital role in fostering partnerships and facilitating the sharing of resources and support among member churches and ecumenical organizations," Oh said.

"The beauty of ecumenical partnerships lies in their ability to transcend divisions and work together towards common virtues in life-flourishing churches and the world. In light of this, my expectation is that the collaboration between CWM and WCRC through my position will be instrumental and a bridge in building reformed and transformed churches," she said.

Intern looking for local impact

An “understated revolutionist” has joined the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) as an intern for the next year.

Sharon Thiong’o, a member of Presbyterian Church of East Africa, sees the ecumenical movement as an important way to make a positive impact on the world. “Even though my efforts may not change much, my participation in the ecumenical movement gives me the opportunity to join my few drops of water with other Christians’ few drops, and at the end of the day have impact the size of an ocean,” she says.

Keen on social and economic justice, Thiong’o is looking forward to better understanding “how the church can make its witness more boldly in defending those oppressed in our communities along the lines of color, status, and background. Moreso, I would like to know how can the church proactively advocate for the rights of the people in regards to economic justice, especially for a just and equitable distribution of resources and fair tax system.”

A church youth leader even as a teenager, Thiong’o has been active in “campaigns for radical change in regards to the welfare of people back in campus and in the previous ecumenical movements I worked with,” she says.

As a trained accountant and financial manager, she understands the need for proper organizational structures in support of programmatic and activist work, but is looking forward to learning more while with the WCRC. “I would like to know better organizational systems and tools that are effective in achieving goals and sustaining objectivity despite the many challenges faced, but also, know



» How does the church merge its good works with the greatest work ever done in history, the death and resurrection of Christ? «

what it takes to center all efforts and activities of an organization so that the ultimate vision of impact is perpetually achieved,” she says.

She doesn’t want the ecumenical work to remain at the global level. “I would like to know how local churches can strengthen their witness in a broken world and how their commitment to the people’s welfare and peace would ultimately lead them to believing in the good news of the gospel of Christ,” she says. “How does the church merge its good works with the greatest work ever done in history, the death and resurrection of Christ?”

“I understand that as a communion, the WCRC endeavors to deepen unity among its members as well as coordinate common initiatives to impact, reform, and transform the world,” she says. “I hope to see the fruit of this effort and witness the blessing of a united body of Christ in a

world that desperately needs it.”

The WCRC internship program gives highly qualified young people an opportunity to gain valuable experience working with an international ecumenical organization. As part of the program’s leadership development goals, interns are given a variety of experiences and responsibilities within the WCRC. They provide project assistance for program offices, participate fully in staff teams, and are assigned executive-level projects for completion.

The program is sponsored by the *Evangelische Mission Weltweit* (EMW), as well as donations from member churches.

The Significance of South Africa
Continued from page 24



A Special Gift

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, president of WCRC Europe, presented a communion cup to WCRC President Najla Kassab at the 2023 Executive Committee meeting. The cup was a gift from WCRC member Baraka Presbyterian Church, Bethlehem.

The processes that followed the decisions in the early 1980s were good examples of the strength of Reformed discernment. Suspended or not, in many ways the interaction between the churches was even stronger than before. Even when not in direct communication, each knew very well what was going on in the other churches and responded to each others' initiatives. This continuous engagement led to processes of learning and transformation that allow us today to come together in discernment and bring our common witness into the life of the World Communion.

In both South Africa and the WCRC as a global body, different perspectives still persist, and not all conflicts are overcome. But today, these differences can be understood and respected as faithful contributions to the processes of discernment to which we believe we are called together.

For the WCRC, the meeting of the Executive Committee in Johannesburg was, therefore, a moment of gratitude and great joy. In the engagement with the member denominations in South Africa, the whole Communion has grown in becoming a koinonia marked by discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being reformed together.

La Décennie pour la justice climatique est lancée
Suite de la page 10

ne va pas, à nommer les maux et à résister à ces maux et, ce faisant, à exprimer l'espérance eschatologique, en témoignant de ce qui ne devrait pas être et donc de ce qui devrait être, et de ce qui sera, selon les promesses de Dieu ».

Jessica Bwali, associée aux campagnes mondiales de Tearfund, s'exprimant au nom des jeunes marginalisés, a déclaré : « Les personnes âgées, les personnes au pouvoir : permettez aux jeunes de s'asseoir à la table et écoutez-les. Laissez-les apporter les idées qu'ils ont. Elles ne sont peut-être pas aussi élaborées ou réalistes, mais c'est là que l'expérience intervient en tant que leader - c'est la direction que nous pouvons prendre. Si nous parvenons à réunir les générations, nous pourrions protéger notre environnement ».

« Comment les jeunes peuvent-ils s'impliquer ? Faites entendre votre voix. L'un des plus grands atouts des jeunes dans la lutte contre le changement climatique est leur capacité à se faire entendre à l'échelle mondiale. Mettez vos centres d'intérêt au service de la lutte contre le changement climatique : agissez par le biais de ce que vous aimez.

La Décennie pour la justice climatique est un concept qui porte sur la division juste, le partage équitable et la distribution équitable des fardeaux du changement climatique, de ses atténuations et de ses responsabilités », a déclaré Hefin Jones, maître de conférences à l'école des biosciences de l'université de Cardiff, et modérateur du webinaire, qui avait pour thème « Apprendre de la Terre, témoigner en faveur de la justice climatique ».

Le webinaire de lancement de la Décennie pour la justice climatique s'est tenu le 5 juin, à l'occasion de la Journée mondiale de l'environnement. Des fonds provenant d'Otto per Mille (Italie) sont utilisés pour soutenir cette initiative.



FROM THE COLLEGIAL GENERAL SECRETARIAT

The Significance of South Africa

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

—1 Corinthians 2:12-13 (NRSV)

The 2023 Executive Committee met in Johannesburg, South Africa. For us as a Communion this is not an ordinary location.

It was the engagement with the South African churches during the time of apartheid that shaped the self-understanding of the WCRC as we know it today. Apartheid challenged both the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), our predecessor organizations, strengthening the commitment to justice and transforming us from a confessional into a confessing communion.

It is no overstatement when we say that the faith response to the apartheid system gave us a true church identity. The 1982 WARC General Council and the 1984 REC Synod declared apartheid a sin and its theological justification a heresy. It was understood that in apartheid the integrity of the gospel itself was at stake and called the church to a faith response.

This transformation was born under pain and brought relations within the WARC to the breaking point. There was no middle ground that allowed a compromise. Confronted with the question of whether apartheid could be justified with the gospel, the answer could only be yes or no. The 1982 declaration of a *status confessionis* consequently led to the suspension of those churches that, at the time, could not join the confession.

The REC, on the other hand, decided against suspending any members, which caused frictions of its own. At its 1988 Synod, REC continued to grapple with the issue, ultimately convening a summit on race that included all South African member churches. This Vereeniging Consultation not only re-emphasized the sinfulness of apartheid and the churches supporting it but produced a document laying out ways people can object to an oppressive and unjust government.

Neither the REC nor WARC ever claimed the authority to pronounce divine judgement on churches or on people. In Reformed understanding, suspension and dissent are possible outcomes of our common discernment of what God requires of us in a given situation. As Reformed Christians, we believe that every believer has received the gift of the Spirit and is called to prophetic witness. But this conviction does not lead to an unlimited relativism in which every position would be equally welcome.

It is the purpose of discernment to test the spirits. In the Reformed church always reforming according to the Word of God, discernment is a process of continuous self-examination. If, in this discernment, certain positions are declared sinful and heretic, they have to be excluded from the discernment process because, otherwise, the integrity of the gospel itself would be compromised. But such a pronouncement must never mean that people and churches that continue to hold such positions would be banned indefinitely from the common search for the truth. According to Reformed understanding, dissenting people still have to be respected as readers of the Bible and seekers of divine truth, even if the disagreements have jeopardized the foundations for a common confession.

And it is this respect for the dissenting person that locates even the sharpest disagreements in the horizon of hope. As a matter of principle, the discernment of the church is always open to the expectation that listening to God's Word will lead to an improved understanding of faith that would allow the church to confess in unity.

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