

The Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Europe

President's Report 2015

How to live out communion? That is always the question if you think about the relations of the member churches with the other member churches.

In a continent with so much different languages, it is not easy to share in each other's church life by written reports on the web or by sharing church-newspapers. So often we hardly know what is happening in other churches of our communion. We don't know about the highlights but we also do not know the sad stories. The meetings of the Council are very important for meeting each other in an informal context and telling each other about our life in church and society, but this has its limitations. We hope that, on the basis of our background and on the basis that we have been brought together in the communion of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, partnerships between individual churches will grow and bloom. As the Steering Committee, we think that (informal) networks will strengthen our communion and we will promote that by organizing conferences or by participating in conferences.

(Look for example a contact between three churches at <http://www.reformatus.hu/mutat/new-tri-church-project-born-in-the-netherlands/>)

In the past year, there were a lot of activities and we want share our work with the Council.

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Accra confession - Regional consultation on asylum

The WCRC organized regional consultations on the theme: "Called to Communion, Committed to Justice: The Accra Confession Ten Years Later". The general objective was to reflect together, through the lens of each regional context, on our commitment to justice as WCRC member churches, amidst the global context of violence and injustice and degradation of both human beings and nature.

The regional consultation for Europe took place from 9th – 10th October, 2014 and was a conference about asylum. The Reformed Alliance in Germany organized this conference together with WCRC Europe. We are very grateful for the work of the Reformed Alliance in Germany. Without their work the organizing of the conference would have been too much for us. The President was present. The report on this consultation is attached to this report as [appendix 1](#).

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Accra confession – Global consultation

The consultation was held in Hanover in November 2014 and was the culmination of a months long series of meetings re-engaging the membership of the WCRC with the Accra Confession.

The global consultation brought together representatives from the WCRC's regions that had held their own consultations, as well as other church leaders. All shared both stories of the impact of the Accra Confession and suggestions for better utilizing it in the future. The President, Vice-President Martina Wasserloos-Strunk and the vice-president of the WCRC Bas Plaisier attended the conference. The report on this consultation is attached to this report as [appendix 2](#).

Theology

The Steering Committee asked the secretary of the theology department of the WCRC, Douwe Visser, to set up, in consultation with Professor Michael Weinrich, a new network of theologians as continuation of the network that had been part of WCRC Europe over the past years.

Douwe Visser organized a meeting of several young theologians in April 2014 in Hanover. The intention was that there should have been a verbal report to the meeting of the Council but unfortunately Douwe Visser is not able to come to the meeting in Belfast. A written report on this consultation is attached to this report as [appendix 3](#).

Executive Committee WCRC

The President participated in the meeting of the Executive Committee in May 2014 in Hanover. There will be a separate report from Rev. Cheryl Meban and a written report is available in the papers for this meeting.

Reformed Church in Transcarpathia (Ukraine)

As proposed at the Council meeting in Warsaw, the Steering Committee wrote in April a solidarity letter to the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia and assured our Reformed sisters and brothers in Ukraine of our on-going prayer and concern.

Because the situation in the Ukraine didn't get better in any way and the hostilities were going further and further, in September the Steering Committee wrote a second letter to express the sincerest concerns and prayers of WCRC Europe for the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia. Also in this letter, we offered to visit to our brothers and sisters in the Ukraine.

Bishop Zán Fábíán invited a delegation to the Ukraine and the President and Vice-President Balázs Ódor visited the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia. Vice-President Martina Wasserloos was also on her way to the Ukraine but the aeroplane had a technical problem which prevented her travelling.

The economic and political situation in the Ukraine is very difficult. Because of the depreciation of the Ukrainian money, even people with a normal salary are having big problems. The situation of the poor is terrible.

We were deeply impressed by the work of the church in the face of immense challenges. We met a living church with an eye for Biblical traditions and beliefs but also for the circumstances of the society. The church does a lot of diaconal work – with the help of many churches in Europe – and has very important projects.

The delegation also included Phil Tanis, executive secretary for communications of the WCRC; Seon Koo Kim, a missionary to Hungary from the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea; Miroslav Pfann, a Czech Reformed minister who will soon be serving churches in Ukraine; Susan Brown, Convener of the Europe Committee of the Church of Scotland's World Mission Council; and Diána Erdélyi, ecumenical secretary for the Reformed Church in Hungary (see [appendix 4](#) for the news item from the website of WCRC).

Further information on the situation you can find at:

<http://www.reformatus.hu/nezet/hirek24/?t=ukraine&lan=en>

Proposal: Normally WCRC Europe doesn't support diaconal projects but in this exceptional situation the Steering Committee proposes to offer €10,000 for a diaconal project. If the Council agrees, the Steering Committee will consult with the church for a good cause for the money.

Solidarity Visit to the Spanish Evangelical Church

During the last few years, the Steering Committee has been making Solidarity Visits to member churches alongside its normal committee meetings. We are prioritising smaller member churches, in particular those who have experienced recent difficulties.

In October the Steering Committee visited the Spanish Evangelical Church (EES). The Steering Committee spoke with the President and the general secretary of the church and with two pastors. Also the Steering Committee got a presentation on the work of El Faro, the social outreach arm of the EES which has been working for 18 years. It started in Santa Columba, near Barcelona, and was initially for addressing social problems in the area. It has expanded considerably over the course of its history and is now also working in South America.

The members of the EES spoke of the history and profile of their church. There has been a Reformed presence since the beginning of the 16th Century. After Civil war, it was severely persecuted by Franco. Under his rule, its seminary closed and many congregations were dispersed. Religious freedom was revoked. Religious freedom returned in 1980. However, the State imposed a federation of non-Catholics but this was clearly unsatisfactory.

Today, there are 300,000 evangelical and protestant people in Spain. Social work and theological work are both big parts of the mission of the EES. At this moment - in common with many churches - the EES has a big problem with support of retired pastors and widows, owing to the impossibility of building up pension funds during the time of Franco. A juridical process to address this injustice has been taken even as far as Strasbourg.

Reformed Church of Romania

A recent court ruling set a dangerous legal precedent which could lead to other instances of the re-nationalization of church properties that were returned to their original owners after the fall of communism. The Steering Committee heard with great dismay about the ongoing processes to 'renationalize' the Székely Mikó Reformed High School in Sepsiszentgyörgy/Sfântu Gheorge. The Steering Committee sent a letter of solidarity to Bishop Béla Kató and offered support in any way the RCR would request, and most of all prayers as the Church faces these events. More information can be found at <http://www.reformatus.hu/nezet/hirek24/?t=miko&lan=en>

Farewell to Jörg Schmidt

The President was present at the farewell of Jörg Schmidt who was, for many years, General Secretary of the Reformed Alliance in Germany. The President brought thanks to Jörg Schmidt for his work for the reformed community.

Letter of congratulation

The Steering Committee sent a letter of congratulation to Professor Károly Fekete, bishop elect of the Transibiscan Reformed Church District of the Reformed Church in Hungary. His induction took place on 24th January 2015 in Debrecen.

Conference Human Trafficking

As a follow up of our conference of Asylum and Migration, the participants proposed that the communication about common challenges in Europe should be continued. The Steering Committee discussed this and wants to support this wish. We think that such a conference makes it possible to live out communion in our region and helps to create informal networks of churches and people who are involved in a common issues.

WCRC-global has this year a Lent campaign about human trafficking and the Steering Committee asked the Reformed Alliance in Germany to organize a conference with WCRC Europe again.

Proposal: The Council supports the plan of the Steering Committee for a regional conference on human trafficking. This conference is scheduled for Autumn 2015, with people from the European reformed community, and will be organized by the Reformed Alliance in Germany and WCRC Europe (Sabine Dressler and Vice-President Martina Wasserloos-Strunk). The Steering Committee is authorized to make a financial contribution to this conference.

Conference Berlin on Asylum and Migration

Because of the importance of the topic of Asylum and Migration for people in Europe and for a common vision of our life and community in Europe, we want to plan a further conference about this issue in Berlin in Spring 2016. The conference will hear voices from European countries about difficulties and opportunities in terms of integration and think about the question of how we could live with the stranger in the midst of our societies on the way to communion. It is intended to learn more about a reformed “Theology of migration” and to recognize and rebuild our engagement in Europe. The conference will be organized in coordination with the Reformed Alliance in Germany and the EKD.

Proposal: The Council supports the plan of the Steering Committee for a regional conference on asylum and migration. The Steering Committee is authorized to make a financial contribution to this conference.

The Steering Committee is grateful for the trust and support of the Council. The work we do is joyful and, we hope, meaningful.

Jan-Gerd Heetderks, President
February 2015

Appendix 1

Report on the European Consultation on the Accra Confession - October 2014 (Hannover)

Introduction and background

In 2004, WARC gathered in General Council in Accra, Ghana. It was a Council with difficult negotiations, with searching for common ground, with many discussions and new definitions. It was a battle for meanings and a struggle for interpretations: what do confession and confessing mean today, facing the struggle, for example, in the Global South of our Community? What does “Empire” mean and what is “living in the midst of Empire”?

One of the main questions was, how could we confess our reformed faith, and following that, how it is possible to reject injustice – especially the economic injustice as one consequence of the neoliberal globalization? We dealt with reflections in a time of crisis, we heard from each other – and it was impressive and sometimes distressing to hear the stories of those who felt suffering. And, at the end, we confessed the Accra Confession (AC) – everybody in his or her own way (the possibility was given by the AC 15). It was a great moment for our Community and a task for the future.

The Accra Confession motivates us to seek a global covenant for justice in the economy and the earth in the household of God.

In 2004, we had the economic injustice of globalization in our focus. It is not a secret that the AC was a difficult point in our later European discussion. There was a lot of rejection in our communities, and the European participants of the General Council had to explain about the process in Accra and the discussions there, to bring more insight to the process of Covenanting, more understanding for the need for the Covenanting process, and more common prayer. Especially the matter of “Empire” was a contentious point – and that appears to be unchanged. Perhaps the discussion about Empire slowed us down in the description of our real problems and our handling with it. We have to define it again and again, and we have to see how it works or rather how they work; we need to think about the empires with which we are confronted in the plural.

As the European contribution to describe the engagement in terms of the AC, the European Area collected in 2010 stories of Reformed Churches and communities, published as booklet: *Europe Covenanting for Justice*.

Now ten years later we have to read the AC anew – not only with respect to the meaning of 2004, but in an advanced way, with new questions for our community today. This does not mean that the problems, economic structures and challenges from 2004 are “yesterday-stories” but the world has turned more and more – we note new coalitions of power, further developed bodies of “Empire” – and more community and partnership is needed. For some of our brothers and sisters in Europe, the political situation has changed in the last ten years. Financial Crisis, unemployment and poverty, especially in the South of Europe was not to be expected in 2004 to the extent it has occurred. We are witnessing political changes and new threats in the world. More than ever we are required to be community and to look in the neighbourhood.

As we have been thinking since 2004, how we can go on with the covenanting process and how we could describe, in the light of the AC, our European challenges in terms of globalization today – the issue of the regional consultation on the AC became clear: We all are affected by migration and asylum – as Christians, as a reformed communion – with our own reformed history of migration and our gratitude for God’s help in times of homelessness.

So WCRC Europe decided in 2013, in consultation with the justice department, that the regional Accra conference should find a focus in asylum and migration issues.

The consultation was organized in cooperation with the ‘Reformierter Bund’ of Germany and we are grateful for this collaboration.

The aim of the consultation was to reflect on how the Accra Confession works in our community and how we live out our covenanting process. For the European Area, we recognized the issue of asylum and migration as our major challenge in Europe – for our Churches but even for the whole society. The consequences of migration are evident in some places: when the Steering Committee visited the reformed community in Athens, we saw the situation of refugees in Piraeus and we felt how this situation gives people in Athens sometimes a feeling of sorrow, helplessness and denial.

Some months ago, the UNHCR gave us information about the current situation of refugees: By the end of 2013, 51.2 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, general violence, or human rights violations. Some 16.7 million persons were refugees: 11.7 million under UNHCR’s mandate and 5 million Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA. The global figure included 33.3 million internally displaced persons and close to 1.2 million asylum-seekers.

In the light of the crisis in Iraq and Syria, and recognizing the situation in the Mediterranean, we must expect that the figures for 2014 are much higher. A UNHCR statement said that the numbers were up substantially in both absolute and percentage terms. In all, 90,000 people crossed to Europe between July 1 and September 30 and at least 2,200 lost their lives, compared to 75,000 people and 800 deaths for the period between January 1 and June 30.

The issues of refugees and asylum seekers and of migration are most urgent for the countries of the European Union. The catastrophe of Lampedusa brings the plight of those who seek to flee their own countries into tragic focus. The EU faces the challenge of developing policies to address the specific situation of migrants, respecting human rights and giving protection to vulnerable people.

For the institutions of the EU, and also for national governments, it is highly important to see and consider their own situation and possibilities, but nevertheless it often gives the impression that the EU is building its own power structures, which are building a new “iron curtain”, excluding people who are in need for help.

The consultation – storytelling

The working method of the consultation was the practice of story-telling. We decided to do so, because we are deeply convinced that we need first empathy and then, as a second step, action.

As European member churches of the WCRC, we are part of and affected by the complex situation in the one or other way. To reflect on our role, at first we listened explicitly to those churches situated in external border countries:

- What are their experiences with regard to the issues of refugees and migrants?
- How do they get involved and what can others learn from their expertise?
- What problems do churches observe by their engagement?
- In which way could we as a communion support each other by taking up responsibility for the sake of humanity?
- In which way does our involvement reflect our theology and our “being the body of Christ”?

The testimonies of the delegates of the churches during the conference were very impressive:

Samuel Amedro, President of the Église of Évangélique au Maroc, told about the situation of the 40,000 refugees who are stranded in North Africa about the work of his church. “Every year, there are more migrants who die in Morocco than in Mediterranean Sea. That is our everyday reality. From my point of view, it is murder. And when you have a murder, you are supposed to find the murderer and the sponsor. You could say: they should go back home! If you think so, you will probably be right. But let me ask you one question: who can steal the dream from the one who has nothing else but his dream? Their dream is the only richness they have. And it is a fabulous engine inside to go through all the proof they have to go through. And you have to know that, most of time, there is no room for them in their own country. In fact, they are not allowed to go back home: because of the shame, because of the investment the whole family made in them sending them for migration. They are forced to succeed! Because the survival of all their family depends on them...”

The Église Évangélique au Maroc looks after the people nobody wants in Europe but who are still trying to get over the fence – the seven meter high border between Morocco and the Spanish enclave of Melilla - the fence which was built to keep refugees on the African continent. Amedro’s church is not rich - what they can give is food, a smile, a prayer, a some companionship and respect for the dignity of those who have nothing - except their dreams of a decent life.

The work of the church is illegal - the state does not allow Moroccans to assist refugees. But the members of the church look after refugees and migrants, who made it from different countries to Morocco and who are now living in a camp in the forest. Many of the women are victims of violence and rape; their babies, who are born in the forest, have no legal status and no one knows them. With a plastic tarpaulin, a church is built and, from a few branches, a wooden cross is made - that is enough to worship.

Amedro told about the people who again and again try to get over the fence but get wounded by barbed wire or by the bullets of the border police. The church is giving emergency medical assistance. How to proceed, he does not know - just that it is getting worse. “We will carry on - please, you are our voice in Europe”, he appealed to the Reformed churches.

The delegates from Hungary, Italy, Greece, Spain, Poland, Lebanon and Morocco gave an impressive picture of the engagement especially of very small churches. They demanded change in European immigration policy and pointed, in their reports to how necessary it is, as Reformed sister churches, that we know more about each other and how important it is to network with one another.

A few quotes:

Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (Doris Peschke):

“A Call for change of attitudes regarding migration in accordance with European values

- A truly human approach to refugee protection in line with international and European conventions, including legal and secure access to Europe for those in need of protection

- A common European asylum system including decent reception conditions as well as a Common European Resettlement scheme.”

Paolo Naso, Italy:

“We invite you to consider Sicily and Lampedusa as the gate where Europe meets the global South, its suffering, its hopes, its human and spiritual richness. So, if Lampedusa is European, it is German also. Swedish or Dutch... And we invite you to include what symbolically Lampedusa expresses in the theological, social and political agenda of your churches”.

Nikos Stefanidis, Greece:

And I want to close by saying that we are not simply a humanitarian organization.

We want to speak also about Christianity, about the Bible, about God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit, about salvation. And we do it in a very careful way.

We provide, in the beginning, a three course meal. After few hours of serving them, we announce that it is time to leave so we can clean the centre for the next day. But we explain that if anyone is interested to hear about Jesus and has questions about Christianity they can stay. Usually about 30-70 refugees are staying. Many are continuing asking questions and reading the Bible and some accepting Jesus and are baptized. And all this for God’s glory only.

The consultation - conclusions

At the end of the conference, we tried to focus on two questions:

1. Why do these small churches invest so much in helping refugees and migrants?
2. Why does Europe do what it does to prevent (too many) refugees and migrants entering Europe ("Fortress Europe")?

In relation to question 1, different motives were mentioned:

One motive, which can be found in almost all countries, was and is the biblical imperative: "Love your neighbour". So, e.g., in Greece (Nikos), churches asked: Is to help refugees just a governmental job? What is our mission? And: What would Jesus do? And the answer is: This is what God asks us to do."

Another reason also was the biblical note "We've been slaves in Egypt", understood as a political reason to look after "slaves" today. In Spain e.g., it was the memory of the Franco dictatorship: the protestant church in Spain was persecuted by her own government and helped by churches from outside Spain.

Similar to that experience are churches going to help because of their own history of being migrants. In Italy this is a major reason to help: the Waldensian church is a migrant church.

Another reason for supporting refugees and / or migrants is that it is just part of the diaconal work. In Hungary, it's the necessary pastoral care; it meets the needs the churches are facing in their society.

In Poland, church people see their involvement as act of gratitude: Polish people left Poland for other countries in Europe and they were helped.

Last but not least, an important motive was just to notice and to speak out: With the Accra Confession (16) we realize: the integrity of the church is at stake!

"It's a question of injustice, what we are facing. The work we do is not an act of sympathy but an act of integrity. We do this to build the church. To help, as we do, is a question of being church, an act of integrity of being church, and so we build church. These acts cause a revival of the church. How can we be a church and not do it. This is why the world will believe." (Najla Kassab from the Lebanon)

"The being of the church is at stake." (Doris Peschke from the CCME).

These words call to mind the words of the AC:

16. We believe that the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act ...

35. We believe in obedience to Jesus Christ, that the church is called to confess, witness and act, even though the authorities and human law might forbid them, and punishment and suffering be the consequence (Acts 4.18ff). Jesus is Lord.

In relation to question 2:

When it comes to the political analysis, there is a gap. Churches and especially congregations in all European countries work for migrants and asylum-seekers, but the church is often restrained in the political discussion about the system.

The political analysis of the situation is not easy too.

There were different questions:

What is the difference between asylum-seekers and migrants? For asylum-seekers there are international conventions especially the Geneva convention but, for example, the fence in Morocco keeps out every one and asylum-seekers are not enabled to ask for asylum. And do people who seek for a better life and flee starvation have fewer rights even though they are not covered by international conventions?

How many refugees / migrants can a society bear?

How to act against a strong movement of populist parties in some parts of Europe?

Is it possible to 'manage' migration (not asylum!)?

Does Europe want to keep cheap labour from outside of Europe?

The participants asked how the churches are involved in the political system. There was a consensus that it is no "accident" that the small churches at the borders of Europe are so involved in helping refugees. Once they met the needs literally by their feet, on the coastlines of their countries they can help better than the "mainline" churches. They usually have more problems when it comes to "political" questions and action. On the other hand, for example in German churches but also churches in other countries, you find congregations helping refugees because of their face-to-face-experience. Refugees are brought to many places in different cities, where church people meet them and help them.

It is clear that another European immigration policy is necessary and that the churches have to try to use their influence to realize another, human policy. In the light of the Accra Confession, as Churches we have to ask how we are part of the system of exploitation and expulsion and maybe how we benefit. We need certainly to find the connection between the neoliberal ideology and the reasons for asylum seeking and migration. This is what the Johannesburg Declaration means when it says: "We speak of

empire, because we discern a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power in our world today that constitutes a reality and a spirit of lordless domination, created by humankind yet enslaving simultaneously.”

But over and above that, it requires us to analyse carefully the reasons for these situations and to discuss these reasons.

Churches need to stand up against dehumanizing procedures and the criminalization of help. Some churches do. There are ongoing discussions in some countries with politicians on these matters.

The participants of the conference also asked for a strong communion so that, on the one side, sister churches know about their work and problems and that, on the other side, churches can help each other too.

“We believe in God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, who calls us as partners in the creation and redemption of the world. We live under the promise that Jesus Christ came so that all might have life in fullness (Jn 10.10). Guided and upheld by the Holy Spirit we open ourselves to the reality of our world.” (AC 17)

November 2014

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk

Jan-Gerd Heetderks

Appendix 2:

Accra Confession: Ten Years Later

What have we done?

The Accra Confession emerges from the suffering and struggle of the people of God to live life in its fullest. As we celebrate ten years of the Accra Confession, we recognize that its adoption by the World Communion of Reformed Churches broke new ground on an issue that was necessary and urgent. The Accra Confession has provided the basis for missional engagement in new and radical ways, becoming a paradigm-changing moment in the history of the Reformed communion.

Over the last ten years the Accra Confession has inspired conversations around what it means to live faithfully as disciples of Christ in the midst of economic injustice. Within the communion and beyond, these conversations provided for a new shared language for the naming of injustice and the call to build a just world. The Accra Confession recognized the connection between the ecological and economic crises and spoke of covenanting for the economy and the earth.

At the same time, certain concepts within the confession challenged member churches, particularly language around empire and neo-liberalism, confession and communion. Despite these contentions, the Accra Confession brought people together around justice issues.

What have we gained?

One of the most important gains since the Accra Confession was adopted has been the document itself: a confession that arose out of the cries and struggles of the global South, resonating with those who suffer in all parts of the world, and strengthening knowledge of North/South dynamics. In discerning the signs of the times, the Accra Confession has proven prophetic.

Since 2004, the Accra Confession has afforded us many opportunities to gain partners who are walking together, such as CWM, LWF, WCC, WSCF, resulting in many initiatives including the New International Financial and Economic Architecture. New faith-based social movements, such as Oikotree and Peace for Life, and numerous publications have also been made possible in part because of the principles of the Accra Confession. The confession also gives us entry points for individuals, churches, NGO's and even governments to engage realities of power, domination, inequality, gender injustice and climate change.

What has happened since 2004?

The emergence of the WCRC as a communion that brought the WARC and the REC together reaffirmed the centrality of the Accra Confession. The confession produced a number of consultations and conversations, among which were the South Africa – German dialogue, the Oikotree project, the Sao Paulo statement on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture and a Gender Reading of the Accra Confession, helping all involved come to terms with the meaning of some of the challenges of the Accra Confession.

The global financial crisis of 2008 confirmed the Accra Confession's definition of empire as "the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests." It also brought to light the convergence of interconnected and complex issues, such as global warming and extreme climate disasters, increased nationalism and non-state players affecting global and regional politics, sustained militarization, the shift in global political and economic powers, agri-business, and unjust trade agreements.

At the same time there has been an emergence of social movements in response to these issues. Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement are a couple of examples of these social movements.

What is missing?

We recognize that the world and economic powers look different today than they did at the 2004 drafting of the Accra Confession. Neo-liberal economics, race and patriarchy have entangled in legion manner. Economic inequality has increased exponentially and the obstinate persistence of racism and racial tensions escalate. Group identities that are most influenced by the effects and realities of empire include but are not limited to discrimination based on caste, indigeneity, gender, sexuality, and disabilities.

We must now work to address the effects of an unjust neo-liberal economic system in a more integrated manner that analyses and responds to these unjust social, political, and economic realities. These interconnections include: growing inequalities that link to human trafficking, displacement and migration; environmental racism, the dangers of nuclear power plants and their vulnerability in the midst of extreme climate change; and political crises which lead to religious and political fundamentalism. We also cannot ignore the deepening of the Palestine-Israel conflict as well as other conflicts around the world.

What is the urgent prophetic response?

We, as the WCRC, are called to respond in new ways to the signs of the times in this new day, 2014. We are called to faith in God, faithfulness to the Word of God, and action according to the principles laid out in the Accra Confession. We recognize that the present social and economic crisis and the state of endless war constitute a crisis of faith and therefore needs a response of faith to witness to the God of Life.

We are called to repentance and confession for the ways in which we each have been complicit in the inequalities and injustices which we have named in this document.

We commit ourselves to openness to the challenges of the Accra Confession itself as new crises arise and call for new understandings of our own prophetic faithfulness.

We commit ourselves to liberation and resistance against all forms of domination.

We commit to work together with partners and social movements with whom we walk this journey of justice.

We commit to deep listening to voices on the margins and those we have silenced, as well as to the voice of the Spirit as she speaks to us through other religious communities.

And therefore we commend to the WCRC body, in its entirety, these action areas:

~ Critical reading of scripture and creative resources for congregations to witness to the God of Life

~ Caste

- ~ Climate change
- ~ Gender and sexuality
- ~ Human trafficking
- ~ Immigration and migration
- ~ The New International Financial and Economic Architecture
- ~ Racism
- ~ The theology of enough

Appendix 3:

An overview of work done by the WCRC theology network

I was asked by the President of WCRC Europe to set up a new network of theologians as continuation of such a network that has been part of WCRC Europe over the past years. The following persons asked accepted to serve:

Michael Weinrich (participant of the former network)
Michael Jagessar
Matthew Prevett
Pascale Renaud-Grosbras
Martin Engels
Viktoria Koczian
John McCullogh
Douwe Visser

We had a meeting 22-26 April 2014 in Hannover. As a starting point for discussion we took the question given to this network from the side of the Steering Committee:

“The Steering Committee wanted to focus on further development of the theme of hermeneutics from the Council in Vienna. We think that it is very important to talk and think in our communion about this question. In many member churches there are discussions with hermeneutic aspects (for example same-sex relationships and the ministry). How can we in our churches, but also in our communion, work on this theme? Are we to be only a communion of the like-minded, who agree with one another, or can we maintain and build communion in diversity? What is the nature of doing reformed theology and its impact on dialogue?”

Based on this we reflected on the following questions:

- *What is theologically relevant in your context?*
- *What is the essential place of Reformed Theology in the whole of theology?*
- *What is the theological task for WCRC and how do you see this network functioning?*

We also looked at the relevant questions for WCRC’s theology work in general.

We developed a list of themes this network can deal with.

The group worked especially on a presentation for the upcoming meeting of WCRC Europe in 2015. In discussion however with the President Jan-Gerd Heetderks we heard that the time for such a presentation this year would be very limited. We therefore propose to come once together this year and to prepare a full presentation for the meeting in 2016.

Douwe Visser

Appendix 4:

Support shown to Reformed church in Ukraine

<http://wcrch/news/support-shown-to-reformed-church-in-ukraine/>

A WCRC Europe delegation on a solidarity visit to the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia were deeply impressed by the work of the church in the face of immense challenges.



“We met a living church,” said Jan-Gerd Heetderks, President of WCRC Europe. “They have an eye for Biblical traditions and beliefs but also for the circumstances of the society.”

The delegation visited Beregszász and Dercen, Ukraine, 9-11 January, traveling in from Hungary. The church in Transcarpathia is a part of the Hungarian Reformed Church, an international expression of church communion between ethnic Hungarian churches in the Carpathian Basin.

The delegation was hosted by Bishop Sándor Zán Fábián and Lay President Béla Nagy, the latter of whom is also director of the church’s diaconal centre.

The diaconal centre coordinates a multitude of programs,

including donated goods distribution, a bakery, a community kitchen, a home for the elderly, schools and a volunteer fire department.

“I was very impressed by their work. They are living testimony to the love of Christ,” said Heetderks.

“What’s most impressive is their faithfulness in the circumstances in which they live,” said Susan Brown, from the Church of Scotland. “It puts things in a slightly different perspective for your own church life. We have the luxury of choosing what to do and what not to do. They don’t have that. If they don’t do, it won’t get done.”

“Though it is a vulnerable community facing immense difficulties and uncertainties, it has a vision and practice of a serving faith community,” said Balázs Ódor, a Vice President of WCRC Europe.



The delegation learned about the challenges of being an ethnic and religious minority, both historically and currently. They formally remembered the dozens of Reformed Hungarian pastors who were exiled, jailed or killed during the Soviet era. And they saw how the church is now working with local governments to plug the many gaps in the social support framework.

“WCRC Europe has a special responsibility towards member churches or Reformed communities in the eastern part of the continent,” said Ódor, “especially those which are in a difficult, minority situation and are challenged by majority religions or the state.”

“The visit of a high level delegation is very important. It shows that there is international

support for the Hungarian minority—both as a people and a religion,” agreed Zán Fábián. “I am very happy that we have brothers and sisters abroad.”

The delegation also included Phil Tanis,

executive secretary for communications of the WCRC; Seon Koo Kim, a missionary to Hungary from the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea; Miroslav Pfann, a Czech Reformed minister who will soon be serving churches in Ukraine; and Diána Erdélyi, ecumenical secretary for the Reformed Church in Hungary.

