

## SECTION 1: REFORMED IDENTITY, THEOLOGY AND COMMUNION

As members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), we recognize that on the ground of Jesus Christ's saving work, the Father through the Spirit calls out one people for God's praise and service, and this people we call the Church catholic. On that basis, as a part of the universal Church, we strive with humility to give expression to our Reformed identity and theology. Our self-awareness comes to expression in our appreciation of various foundational principles. At the same time, our self-awareness reminds us that we are a people on a journey to become more fully the communion we are called to be.

A deep allegiance to the authority of the Bible as God's word was central to the development of the 16th century Protestant Reformation; continuing recognition of that authority is basic to our identity in Christ as guided by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3.16-17). As churches also informed by creedal and confessional documents that summarize our understanding of Scripture, we submit our own traditions and ambitions to constant reformation by the Spirit as we live as followers of Jesus Christ in ever changing cultures (*Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* — the Reformed church always has to be reforming).

In baptism, the Church recognizes new birth into the family of God (1 Pet 3.21), and in the communion of the Lord's Table we recognize a wondrous union with Christ and with each other (1 Cor 11.25-26). Receiving and celebrating the gift of salvation, we long for the constant growth of the body of Christ. In the worship of God and in the fellowship of believers, everyone is warmly welcomed. New members are disciplined and, as followers of Christ, all members are urged to grow in faith and action.

We consciously call ourselves a "communion" of churches. Our rich communion with Christ calls for deep commitment. It reminds us that our identity flows out of a gift of unity that is ours by God's grace. The triune God welcomes and transforms our lives through the gifts of forgiveness, reconciliation and sanctification. Accordingly, the gift of communion that we have received from God leads to celebration in worship. Our liturgical expressions, with diversity, attest to the greatness of our awesome God.

In Reformed theology, we affirm and embody characteristics that distinguish how we see our place in God's world. Covenantal theology provides a framework by which we see holistic connections in God's unfolding plan of salvation, to which we are called to witness. To own our Reformed identity is to express appreciation for God's gift of grace. At the same time, it evokes a commitment to strive tirelessly by God's grace to become more and more the communion that God calls us to be. Embracing God's sovereign love, manifested in the call of Christ, we are compelled to express spiritual and social solidarity with those who suffer injustice and brokenness in this world (Am 5.24; Mic 6.8). The gracious sovereignty of God reminds us that God lovingly claims this whole world as God's own. That recognition energizes our carrying out of our calling in God's mission (Mat 28.18-20). It encourages us to develop our intellect and skills in all areas of life to be a light in a dark world (Mat 5.16).

As we profess the priesthood of all believers, we value the equality and dignity before God of all members – those abled and differently abled, young and old, female and male. We are challenged to be responsible keepers of the earth that God created and entrusted to our care. In living and deepening our Reformed identity, we seek to experience peace with and gain greater understanding and appreciation of those neighbours who are of other faith backgrounds.

As a World Communion of Reformed Churches, we have much to learn as we seek to live out our Reformed identity, theology and communion.<sup>1</sup> Yet, we face the future in the confidence that the Holy Spirit has been sent to equip and lead the Church.

### **Recommendations:**

1. That the WCRC office encourage the development of a network of theologians who would organize and coordinate their own efforts towards shared theology from around the globe.
2. That the WCRC emphasizes the importance of theological training in the life of its churches.
3. That the WCRC promote the exchange of pastors, of lay leadership, and the exchange or sharing of experiences between member churches.
4. That the WCRC, by means of consultations, advance the study of “Communion” in terms of its nature, foundation, significance, and rules of engagement.
5. That the office help the membership of WCRC to clarify what it means to be a confessional or confessing church.
6. That the office develop a network of people to advance our understanding of a Reformed theology of religions to assist in interfaith dialogue.
7. That the WCRC office facilitate the wider use of catechetical materials in the churches by coordinating what is available and making it electronically accessible.
8. That the WCRC office assist in the preparation or collection of prayers for each other, and prayers for use in worship, making them available electronically.
9. That the WCRC continue publication of Reformed World and that it be made accessible to the general membership of all the churches in WCRC.
10. That the WCRC office prepare for involvement in the 2013 Heidelberg Catechism anniversary and the 2017 Wittenberg Reformation jubilee.

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<sup>1</sup> A most helpful document that serves to set the programme for further advancement is the report entitled “Global Theological Consultation on Communion and Justice 4-9 March 2010 Cartigny, Switzerland: A message to the members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.”