

SECTION 2: SECTION ON CHRISTIAN UNITY AND ECUMENICAL ENGAGEMENT

Objective: The objective of this section was to critically examine the role of the WCRC in ecumenical relations in light of past REC and WARC involvements and to make recommendations for further work.

Introduction:

Celebrating our communion visible in the World Communion of Reformed Churches can be seen as a very important step in the history of Reformed churches worldwide. It is an essential sign of our commitment to overcoming division. It shows the “Unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”. It affirms the long commitment of Reformed churches who have inspired the ecumenical movement throughout the world. It strengthens Reformed Christians worldwide in their desire for unity among the churches. It is important to underline that unity does not mean “uniformity”. Unity is often and can be lived out in reconciled diversity.

Notwithstanding what has been done before, it could be worth considering the idea of focusing more in the coming years on the reception of the results of the dialogues on a local and regional level. The dialogues have gone on for quite a few decades and have resulted in many agreements. These results however are often in a sort of global vacuum. Member churches have often not seen much of a change within their context of living together. That may be a reason why there is a critical approach towards the continuation of the dialogues. Why it may appear that many dialogues are at a standstill, they remain critical

On the other hand it is also true that many feel dialogues to be at a standstill. The same subjects are being discussed yet not many great steps forward are being made. In view of this an idea might be to organize local or regional dialogue consultations that work as a reception process for harvesting the results simultaneously with ongoing dialogues. WCRC’s regional councils could be very much involved in the set-up of these consultations.

“The ultimate purpose of ecumenical engagement is rooted in God’s mission and witness to justice,” therefore, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Reaffirm the Lund Principle 1952. To do everything together except those things where deep differences of conviction compel us to act separately.
2. To construct a framework, with a multiplicity of methodologies which is multi-directional, and resourced by the Geneva office, the Regions and the Member Churches. All within the framework of developing the communion.
3. To encourage dialogue / interaction amongst WCRC Member Churches: specific topics may include Episcopate, ordination and general participation in leadership, especially as they impact women.
4. Ecumenical engagements to take place with other Communion and faith-based organizations focusing on theological basis and implications for social justice and action.
5. In the spirit of mutual recognition of authority we recommend that WCRC initiate, foster, and further ecumenical relationships and to invite regional councils (where not available

member Churches) to both receive and appropriate this work for their local context while at the same time identifying issues out of their particular context for wider engagements by WCRC.

6. In recognizing that WCRC provides an international overview of the reception and implementation of ecumenical engagements, we recommend that space be provided at General Council meetings for stories to be shared about such “fruits of the harvest” so that different contexts can share their experiences and learn from each other.
7. To have a consultation within WCRC to consider the possibility of associating with the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” (1999).
8. To have a consultation within WCRC about the “Leuenberg Agreement” (1973) and comparable agreements with churches and regions that have not yet signed. (See Communion and Justice Document on sharing resources equally and having a full communion).
9. We recommend that in the horizon of each ecumenical engagement we have “Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth” (The Accra Confession, 2004) as an invitation to give witness to our common concern for global economic and ecological justice as a matter of faith.