Jessica Bwali seeks to be voice to voiceless

“She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future.”

—Proverbs 31:25

The Work and Witness of the World Communion of Reformed Churches: Confessing the God of life in a world fallen among thieves

Called to communion and committed to justice, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)* works to renew and restore the economy and the earth, so that all humanity and the whole of creation might live life in its fullness (Deuteronomy 30:19).

As a global communion marked by discerning, confessing, witnessing and being reformed together, the WCRC strengthens and deepens unity among its member churches and coordinates common initiatives to increase its impact around the world.

Confessing in the Present Tense

The whole of creation is the “theatre of God’s glory.” This tenet of John Calvin leads the WCRC to follow both the imperatives and the approach of confessing moments as represented by the Barmen Declaration and the confessions of Belhar and Accra.

Jesus did not locate his ministry in the centres of power. He challenged the authority of political, economic, familial and religious authorities and enabled his followers to see the emerging Kingdom of God in the liberating, healing, feeding, cleansing, raising, reconciling and empowering of those who were excluded from full participation in communal life.

Bringing the resources of the Reformed theological and confessing tradition into the present tense means listening to the suffering and cries of humanity and all of creation. The WCRC takes up the prophetic traditions of public witness as a confessing communion in a world fallen among thieves (John 10:10).

Called to Communion, Committed to Justice

Applications invited for GIT

Applications are now open for the 6th Global Institute of Theology (GIT) to be held 15-29 June 2020 at the Union Theological Seminary in the City of Dasmariñas, Philippines.

The GIT will offer a unique opportunity for a community of students from around the world to live and learn and do theology together in a fully inter-contextual and ecumenical way, connecting theology from the local to the regional and world levels.

The theme of this GIT will be “Unsettling the Word.” The history of the church is full of examples where the belief in the God of justice assured the excluded and exploited of their capability to resist structures of oppression. In these situations, the Christian faith is showing its unsettling potential. Theology provides the language for the re-location from the centres of power to the margins.

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Learn more and get applications through this link: http://wccr.ch/git

* The World Communion of Reformed Churches is comprised of 100 million Christians from over 230 Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting and Waldensian churches in more than 105 countries.
Cultivating a Just Communion

The WCRC is a global koinonia, marked by “discerning, confessing, witnessing and being reformed together.” This koinonia comes into being as a communion by the openness that allows the Holy Spirit to transform the individual, the community of believers and the world as a whole. This communion emerges from the contributions of all people of faith and therefore questions authoritarian leadership and rejects all forms of exclusion. In living out God’s calling to communion the WCRC therefore commits itself firmly to justice.

Covenancing for Justice

The WCRC seeks to do justice in the context of a world groaning in travail (Romans 8:19-24) and fallen among thieves (John 10:10), yet we continue to affirm that we are gripped with the power of the resurrection, gifted by the God of life. The Accra Confession named “empire” as that overarching system under which we live, and to which we as the church are called to resist. The primary areas that drive the justice work of the WCRC are economic justice, ecological justice, gender justice and inclusive communities.

Doing Theology for Transformation

Christians and churches all over the globe are inspired by the call to join into God’s continuous reforming of the church and transforming of the world. Engaging with the unfinished agenda of the Reformation starts with processes discerning in which the voices of wounded communities receive special attention because in their cries the WCRC hears the words of the crucified God. This engagement leads into processes of confessing the faith to which theology is called to provide language to address the present reality, drawing on the Reformed traditions and contextual theologies.

Engaging God’s Mission in a Context of Crisis

In responding to the call to communion and in affirming the commitment to justice the WCRC becomes part of God’s mission (mission dei) to renew the whole creation. God’s mission transforms the church into a missional communion that commits itself to God’s work of renewal and transformation. In this mission the WCRC collaborates with all people of good will inside and outside of the church, committing itself to participate in liberating discipleship.

Working with All the Partners God Provides

The WCRC believes “to be Reformed is to be ecumenical.” The Reformed understanding of the church therefore transcends the boundaries of any particular church. Reformed theology sees that God is at work also in other Christian traditions and understands that the unity of the church to which the Apostolic Creed testifies is already there. God gives unity as a gift and invites the church to receive this by reforming itself and its relationships to Christians of other traditions.

GEM School: Building God’s vision of life-in-fullness for all creation

“God’s vision of life-in-fullness for all creation, not just human beings, has never been more threatened than today,” said Seong Won Park of the Gyeyongan Theological Seminary in the opening panel of the annual Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics and Management for an Economy of Life (GEM School) held in Indonesia in August.

Park emphasized how climate change and the 4th industrial revolution are now converging with the ongoing global economic crisis and aggravating socio-economic inequalities and insecurity for an ever-growing number of people.

“During the opening panel on ‘Putting Economic Justice at the Heart of Faith,’ Septemy Lakawa, president of the Jakarta Theological Seminary, said, ‘In response, we as people of faith continue to envision an economy of life that is also an economy of ‘enough.’ Enough in the sense of providing sufficiently for the basic needs of all people, but also enough in the sense of saying ‘no’ to an economic system based on accumulation that excludes and harms the most vulnerable.’

Lakawa added, ‘Identifying and sharing the most vulnerable is a political choice. It is also a faith choice. We cannot separate the two.’

GEM School is a space for learning— including from each other—why and how to advocate for urgently needed transformations in the financial and economic architecture by exploring new economic concepts and exchanging tools, languages, and models.

As part of the contextualizing and relearning what and for whom the economy and economics ought to be, GEM School participants visited a community of scavengers living along busy railway lines in the centre of Jakarta, a rapidly growing metropolis where numerous modern skyscrapers are under construction. Beneath a tarp, some of the participants helped to distribute food packages to around 300 women, men and children as train sizzled past.

“I realize how much privilege I have,” said Renate Marique, a participant from the Netherlands. “I do not have to queue or rely on someone’s generosity for my lunch. I have clean water and a roof over my head.”

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—Lena Cruchley