



**CARIBBEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN AREA COUNCIL OF THE  
WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES**



**STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING**

13-14 October 2010

Toronto, Ontario (Canada)

Hosted by: United Church of Canada

**CANAAC Steering Committee Members Present:**

Bruce Adema, Christian Reformed Church in North America

Omega Bula, United Church of Canada

Joel Ortega Dopico, Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba

Elvis Elahie, Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago

Ralph Kendall, Treasurer – Presbyterian Church in Canada

Oliver Patterson, Reformed Church of America

Neal Presa, Convenor – Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Tara Tyme, Deputy Convenor – United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

**Excused Committee Members:**

Maureen Massiah, Presbyterian Church of Guyana

Robina Winbush, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

**Guests:**

Yvette Noble-Bloomfield, Vice President –Caribbean, World Communion of Reformed Churches

Patricia Sheeratan Bisnauth, Executive Secretary for Justice and Partnership, WCRC Secretariat

1. Neal called the meeting to order, following chapel with the General Council Office staff of the United Church of Canada. Omega welcomed everyone to the United Church facility, and gave an update about global justice ministries. Everyone had the opportunity to introduce themselves.
2. The Agenda was reviewed. Neal asked for notetakers. Bruce and Oliver agreed to take notes. They, together with Neal, will compile notes and their recollections and develop the Administrative Notes for this meeting.
3. A discussion was held about the journey of CANAAC from Techny (2006) to Guyana (2008) to Toronto (2010) to the Dominican Republic (2011).
  - a. CANAAC is more clearly now the regional expression of the global Reformed church. In the past, the focus was on theological reflection, and it tended to alienate the North

American and Caribbean churches from each other and was not much connected with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

- b. The reality that the CANAAC region is really two regions is a challenge, but also an opportunity to understand each other and be shaped by each other. Some have suggested that we become two regions.
- c. Our role as an area council in alignment with other area councils was discussed.
4. The Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids was discussed. The concept of Communion is critically important, and is a special challenge for CANAAC (because of the nature of our region). WCRC is a new body – not just a continuation of WARC and REC. Strategic planning and visioning is going on. The situation in Haiti (post earthquake) and Cuba (ongoing blockade) are high on the list of concerns for our members. The role of the Caribbean churches, and the strength of their voices, was discussed; concern was that those voices are not heard clearly enough.
5. Convener's Report.
  - a. Traveled to Rome for the Pontifical Council on Christian Unity.
  - b. The CRC of the Dominican Republic is a new member of CANAAC and WCRC.
  - c. Youth Forum was held pre-UGC, and was a success. Unfortunately, some could not get visas.
  - d. As convener of CANAAC he now has a voice and vote on WCRC Executive Committee, a constitutional provision that he, together with Latin American members of the former WARC Executive Committee and other Area Council moderators, advocated for.
  - e. CANACOM recommends the postponement of the launch of the Reformed Youth Network (because of financial realities).
  - f. CANAAC provided funding for theological institute and UGC.
  - g. Neal was asked to be a facilitator of the meeting of the North America section at UGC.
  - h. Being a communion means we must participate in strategic planning processes. We need to consider how to take it to the next level. Suggestion: ask the 21 member churches to appoint a permanent presence of WCRC and/or CANAAC in their governing bodies.
  - i. A discussion as held about what should be included in a Convener's Report. It should take into account the events and issues of the Caribbean.
6. Financial proposal from Endowment Fund Board of Directors. Clifton Kirkpatrick joined the meeting by conference call. The proposal is that CANAAC provide seed money (\$12,000) for the first year of the Endowment Committee's work. The Endowment will be another source of funding for projects of CANAAC and WCRC, and does not take away the call to the churches to financially support the work of CANAAC and WCRC.

Motion: The Steering Committee will contribute \$12,000 as seed money for the first year of the Endowment Fund's work. APPROVED

7. Tara led in noon time devotions.

8. Treasurer's Report was presented. The Budget Overview, Balance Sheet and Income Statement were distributed. There is a balance in the bank, but income is below expenses, and is thus an item of concern.
9. Bylaw amendment recommendations. Suggestions:
  - a. Add to VII.1: Appoint a five member nominating committee from among the delegates to the meeting of CANAAC.
  - b. Convener:
    - i. Consider having co-conveners: possibilities:
      1. One from north and one from south.
      2. One from North America, one from the Caribbean.
    - ii. Consider having one convener, but that conveners alternate from Caribbean and North America.
 

A sub-committee is established to look more deeply into this issue (pros and cons, those who have tried this, theological considerations, etc.), and is to bring its recommendations back to the steering committee via teleconference. Named: Tara Tyme and Elvis Elahie.
  - c. VI.1.3.3: When a church sends three or more delegates, at least one-half shall be women.
10. Joint CANACOM / CANAAC meeting: hopes and expectations
  - a. The planning team members are Tara Tyme, Robina Winbush, Omega Bula (with Nicki A. and Osbert James of CANACOM).
  - b. Outcomes sought: establish youth network, youth theological consultation and institute; collaborate more closely on program and justice issues; align resources and energy to do program activities; good theological reflection; learn about the situation in Haiti and the church in the Dominican Republic's involvement in the relief / development effort; (Bruce to inquire about CRC in DR's capacity to facilitate theological reflection); visit ministries in the region;
11. CANACOM
  - a. Update: Dopico serves as vice-chair of CANACOM, and he provided an update on the activities of CANACOM. They are supporting initiatives of local churches. They are looking forward to the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary . There is interest in growing in understanding of youth issues and involvement of youth. They want to change the way they work in order to gain even more impact.
  - b. Launch of Reformed Youth Network. Due to funding and revisioning, CANACOM wishes to postpone this until 2012. The Steering Committee concurs.
12. Section Reports – coming out of the UGC.
  - a. **Reformed Identity:** Yvette explained:
    - i. That the call is for a group of theologians to discern what it means to be a communion in the Caribbean and North America (taking into account contemporary issues). What does leadership and partnership mean, theologically? Role of forgiveness and grace? How can theology get down into

the pews, and not remain solely in the ivory tower? How does interfaith dialogue appropriately take place?

- ii. Theological institutions encouraged to work collaboratively.
- b. **Christian Unity and Ecumenical Engagement:** Neal recommends:
  - i. Ask CANAAC to communicate with the WCRC Office of Theology and Ecumenical Engagement, that CANAAC host or inform the dialogues with other denominations / traditions, to ensure they are about justice.
  - ii. Ask CANAAC for permission to work with member churches in the region to organize theological consultations over next three years about justice and justification
  - iii. CANAAC convene a meeting of Covenanting for Justice working groups together with the Stellenbosch-Germany Globalization Project Feasibility Task Force to determine how ACCRA confession can be implemented in the region's churches.
- c. **Justice in the Economy and the Earth:** Omega and Pat presented a document produced by WCRC staff that pulled together decisions adopted by UGC that relate to this subject.
  - i. Establish an international core group, including feminist theologians, pastors, economists and climate change experts to develop a process to support churches' engagement on economic and climate justice issues from critical gender and racial perspectives.
  - ii. Promote and work towards the realization of the vision of life-giving civilization as an alternative to the neo-liberal economic paradigm, introducing new metrics that reflect God's intention for the flourishing of creation, and humankind within creation, that will include engaging the powers in the world economic system.

(continued in article 16)

- 13. Omega led in closing devotions to end the day's meeting.
- 14. Neal welcomed everyone to a new day's meetings, following chapel with the Gender Justice Work Group of the United Church of Canada.
- 15. Caribbean / North American Covenanting for Justice process. Oliver distributed a document he prepared. He recommends:

That CANAAC evolve a model that builds on the work of the Globalization Project developed by the Evangelical Reformed Church of Germany and the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa. These are the recommended dimensions of the project:

- Its primary focus should be upon "themes" or critical issues that are mutually shared by the people of both the Caribbean and North America (e.g. trade, importation, education, health, banking). This will maximize the potential for true collaboration between and among the regions.
- The project should be housed at a research institution in the Caribbean. It is important that the faculty of the institute have scholars from both the applied and theoretical areas of scholarships.

- A Christian ethical perspective should frame the issues and the dialogue. I would recommend that the leader be a well respected Caribbean Christian leader who has a record of passion and leadership for social justice.
- The fruits and insights of the project must be shared with congregations. Fellows might be assigned to specific churches and clusters of churches in order to receive and transmit information.

Comments:

- How were the churches in South Africa and Germany engaged to move the process forward? It is important that the message gets down to the pew level, and not be isolated at the academic level.
- Immigration issues: were they addressed? What approaches and tools were used? What can we learn for our context?

Note: The RCA is defraying the expenses of Oliver for his participation and leadership in this Feasibility Task Force.

#### 16. Section Reports (continued).

- d. **Reconciliation:** Oliver shared a document that he wrote, coming out of this work at the Covenanting for Educational Justice Institute. He makes seven recommendations:
  - i. Call all together. I would recommend that a small planning group be appointed to plan a gather of leaders committed to racial reconciliation.
  - ii. Discern. Plan educational forums that discern the signs of the time in order to build understanding and unity.
  - iii. Reconciliation and Justice. Plan local, regional and national forums devoted to racial and reconciliation and justice.
  - iv. Bind communities. Commit churches and clusters of churches to build communities that seek justice.
  - v. Secular world. Collaborate with the secular world in sponsoring cross-cultural programs that promote peace and justice.
  - vi. Public mission. Collaborate with New Brunswick and Western Seminaries to design the movement in a manner that it does follow the public mission of Jesus Christ.
  - vii. Each church have a social justice advocate, with clusters of churches forming Covenanting for Justice Institutes.
- e. **Worship:** Bruce noted that the item that is CANAAC actionable regards the document “Worshipping the Triune God.” He recommends that:
  - i. The introduction be re-written as a cover letter and an introduction that will be attached to the body of “Worshipping the Triune God.” Care should be taken to contextualize the communication for the Caribbean and North America region.

- ii. That the introduction and body of “Worshiping the Triune God” be put into a pdf format that can be attractively reprinted.
  - iii. That the document, with a cover letter, be sent electronically to all the denominations in CANAAC, asking that they send the document to all the congregations and that they consider using this document in the ways explained in the current introduction. Further, we ask that the Churches provide feedback to the Steering Committee, including suggestion revisions.
  - iv. That the Steering Committee share the insights gained through this process with the Executive Committee of WCRC.
- f. **Youth:** Dopico presented twelve recommendations regarding the section on youth:
  - i. Create local CANAAC YOUTH biblical-theological reflection teams in youth association or fraternity at the congregational or presbytery level.
  - ii. Create a regional youth concourse about theological articles suggested by CANAAC for the region and publish them in the appropriate places.
  - iii. Establish connections, partnerships and links between the official leaders of the different youth organizations of the member churches in the region at the local, national or presbytery level.
  - iv. Encourage CANAAC churches in our region to include youth delegates or members in their councils and executive bodies.
  - v. Establish an interchange between pastors and lay youth leaders (under 30) between the different churches in the region.
  - vi. Compile a data base and directory of the youth leaders, youth pastors, youth ministries, and youth projects in the region.
  - vii. Many of the North American churches organize youth mission trips to the Caribbean area. It would be very important to try to connect with them and to motivate them in theological reflection. Most of them do this but we need to find a way so that they could share and promote that experience.
  - viii. Facilitate youth university mission trips and Presbyterian Reformed campus ministries.
  - ix. Encourage more dialogue and interchange between professor and students from the seminaries in the area.
  - x. Youth Triennium, create and participate as CANAAC or promoting ACRA Confession discussion, workshop or in other issues of interest to CANAAC. And similar activities organized by church members.
  - xi. Link and contact with National Council of Churches Youth Section.
  - xii. Partnerships, connections and interchange information and experience with other youth WCRC regions.
- g. **Gender Justice:** Tara
  - i. CANAAC facilitates training for women in Caribbean churches to heighten their awareness of gender justice with issues of persons with disabilities.

- ii. Create Women's Bible Study Project in the Caribbean.
  - iii. Hold forum that brings North American and Caribbean women together with the goal of creating partnerships that highlight gender justice issues.
- h. **Education:** Ralph brings these recommendations:
- i. Reaffirm the Importance of gender and racial equality in terms of all forms of training, from lay to theological education / formation. (no financial requirement)
  - ii. Recommitment to theological reflection about "all forms of authority and structures of power." (no financial requirement)
  - iii. Support youth leadership development through networking, resourcing, training and fellowship, and the appointment of a youth network facilitator. Suggestion from the floor: collaborate with CANACOM and discuss the possibilities in line with this recommendation.
- i. **Mission:** Elvis
- i. Develop a theology of repentance for the way the Church has engaged in mission in the past.
  - ii. Develop indigenous creeds for the regions.
  - iii. Create an interfaith / inter-religious council to network (collaborate) with other faith communities, and together develop an interfaith theology.
- j. **Message Committee:** Yvette reminded us that the elements of the WCRC symbol formed the frame for the final message of UGC.
- i. The message from the UGC be placed in every congregation of all the member churches.
  - ii. Lift up the symbol of WCRC in the member churches (stationary, signage, websites, etc.).
- k. **Public Issues Committee:** Tara
- i. CANAAC and its member churches will stand in solidarity with the people of Haiti.
17. The General Secretary of the United Church of Canada, Nora Sanders, addressed the Steering Committee and brought greetings and good wishes.
18. Teleconference with Mike Peters of the Odawa tribe. Mike is the gentleman who presented the family peace medallion to the WARC president and REC president at the UGC.
- a. Mike introduced himself. Has been ministering to Native Americans in the inner city. He is a Native American himself. He is a chief of his clan. His vision is to see many Native Americans find peace and joy in Jesus Christ. He shared his personal story, about how he came to understand the gospel through his culture. He did not need to leave his culture to be a Christian.
  - b. Mike shared the challenge and the need for ministry to First Nations people. An invitation was extended to him to join the CANAAC assembly in the Dominican Republic.
  - c. After the call was over, a time of reflection and de-briefing from the phone call took place.

19. Priorities for Justice:
  - a. Network of Theologians
  - b. Caribbean Bible Study
  - c. Forums on gender justice for women with disabilities
  - d. Gathering of “Covenanting for Justice” working groups and Feasibility Task Force
  - e. Solidarity with Haiti
20. Priorities for Mission and Theology:
  - a. Network of Theologians
  - b. Inter-religious / interfaith organizations / councils
21. Priorities for Youth and Education:
  - a. Converse / collaborate with CANACOM
  - b. Include youth in the Network of Theologians
  - c. Institute Network of Young Theologians
  - d. Link the Networks of Theologians (old and young) with the seminaries in the regions
22. Priorities for Worship and Reformed Identity
  - a. Regarding the resource “Worshiping the Triune God”
    - i. The introduction be re-written as a cover letter and an introduction that will be attached to the body of “Worshiping the Triune God.” Care should be taken to contextualize the communication for the Caribbean and North America region.
    - ii. That the introduction and body of “Worshiping the Triune God” be put into a pdf format that can be attractively reprinted.
    - iii. That the document, with a cover letter, be sent electronically to all the denominations in CANAAC, asking that they send the document to all the congregations and that they consider using this document in the ways explained in the current introduction. Further, we ask that the Churches provide feedback to the Steering Committee, including suggestion revisions.
    - iv. That the Steering Committee share the insights gained through this process with the Executive Committee of WCRC.
  - b. Send the UGC Message to all the churches, and request distribution to congregations.
23. Expenses – anticipated current CANAAC expenses are \$70,000:
 

2010:	Toronto:	4,000 (additional 2,000 prepaid, not in this number)
	Stellenbosch	7,000
	WCRC Endowment	12,000
	Administration	8,000
2011:	Jan. Planning Team	4,000
	CANAAC meeting DR	35,000
24. Anticipated income: 71,500.
25. Funds expected to be available for program: \$20,000. (leaving about \$50,000+ in reserves)
26. Caribbean and North America Youth Network should be invited to bring a proposal about youth facilitator and programmatic implications

27. The Convener and Deputy Convener will gather all the data, and make it into a clear proposal, and will be distributed to steering committee members, for adoption by email or conference call meeting. Expect conference call meeting Feb 2011. That teleconference will also include reports from the Stellenbosch-Germany Feasibility Task Force, reports from the Dominican Republic Gathering Planning Team, and consideration of the research findings of the By-Laws Subcommittee regarding the Co-Convener proposal.
28. Ralph will send the \$12,000 to the Endowment Fund committee as a lump sum.
29. Bruce to prepare cover letter and reworked introduction of "Worshiping the Triune God". He will send his results to Steering Committee members, and the document and cover letter will be sent to member churches on behalf of the Steering Cmte. by the Convener and Deputy Convener.
30. The Steering Committee authorized the Convener and Deputy Convener to complete the WCRC Strategic Planning questionnaire and transmit it to the Geneva Secretariat.
31. The meeting was concluded with expressions of appreciation for a good meeting, and good leadership for the meeting in our Convener, Neal Presa. Closing prayer was led by Ralph.

Prepared by:  
Bruce Adema

Attested by:  
Oliver Patterson  
Neal Presa