



What Is the WRF and What Does It Do?

Some Recent Examples

[Date of this report: February 23, 2017]

1. Our members often write to request assistance with specific theological or personal matters and we try to provide that assistance when we can. Normally, we do this by contacting all of our members regarding the specific issue and allowing them to provide the assistance. ***We see this as an example of "the strengths of some becoming the strengths of all in the service of Jesus Christ."*** Here are six recent examples of such requests and of the assistance we provided.

A. On February 20, 2017, we received the following e-mail:

Hello Sam Logan,

I hope you are well.

I have a friend who has just moved to New Delhi, India for work. He is a young Vietnamese Christian and is in need of fellowship and a good church.

Are there any WRF members he could get in touch with?

Thank you,

Blessings in Christ

Koos Hagg in Hanoi

We were able to respond the same day providing full contact information for all of our members who live in New Delhi, one of whom, Dr. Hiralal Solanki, is a member of the WRF Board.

B. On February 10, 2017, we received the following request from the Rev. Tawk Kap, Presiding Officer of one of our member denominations:

The Reformed Community Churches in Myanmar is a combination of seven local churches which was started in 1999. It has a very strong enthusiasm for church planting among the local people in Myanmar. Apart from being a member of WRF, it has been independently established and operated till today. So we are looking for a larger denomination who may like to adopt as their sister church. Can you please recommend any church or leader that you think, may be interested? We would like to be in touch with Reformed or Presbyterian churches. The Reformed Community Churches in Myanmar stands for Reformed theology, particularly to the Reformed doctrines of

Scripture alone, Grace alone and Faith alone. It will be wonderful to work with a larger denomination from any country such as USA, UK, Germany, The Netherlands, France, South Korea, etc.

We were able to share this request with the contact persons of five of our denominational members and two of those wrote back quickly to indicate appreciation for being contacted and saying that they would consider following up with the Reformed Community Churches in Myanmar.

C. On February 6, 2017, we received a request from another of our denominational members, The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (USA) that we contact all of our members on behalf of EPC missionary Andrew Brunson who has been imprisoned for four months in Izmir, Turkey. The EPC suggested three courses of action which WRF members might take, one of which involved signing a petition to the White House in Washington, D.C. and another of which involved signing a petition to President Erdoğan of Turkey. We shared that request with all of our members and many of them did sign one or both of those petitions. Rev. Brunson remains in prison at the present time but efforts are ongoing to secure his release.

D. Another of our denominational members is the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. Three of their missionaries to Senegal were arrested and imprisoned for carrying on Christian evangelism in that largely Muslim country. We were contacted by that denomination and asked to help with the situation. We wrote ***a proposed letter to the President of Senegal urging that the Brazilian missionaries be released***. We then sent that letter to all of our members, inviting them to add their signature to it. 116 did so and the nations from which the signatures came are these - ***Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, The Czech Republic, El Salvador, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Italy, Madagascar, The Netherlands, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, The Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Trinidad, Uganda, and The USA***. Two weeks after the letter was sent, the missionaries were freed. Of course, the letter did NOT bring this about. The Lord freed the missionaries. But He may have sovereignly chosen to use the WRF letter in doing so.

E. One of our member congregations is in a predominantly Roman Catholic country. They have seen some conversions from Roman Catholicism to the evangelical Reformed faith and they asked us whether re-baptism is required of those converts who were originally baptized in Roman Catholic churches. We received 12 responses (some quite lengthy) from WRF members in ***Australia, the Netherlands, South Africa, and the United States***. These were shared with the inquiring member.

F. Another of our members, this time an individual, who is also involved in ministry where Roman Catholicism is dominant, asked us to provide assistance in understanding the similarities and differences between the Reformed doctrine of sphere sovereignty and the Roman Catholic doctrine of subsidiarity. In response to this request, we received advice from WRF members from ***Brazil, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United States*** and this advice was shared with the inquiring member.

2. In May of 2016 Dr. Flip Buys, International Director of the WRF participated in Cairo in a strategic planning consultation on pastoral training of more than 400 Muslim Background Christians from North-African countries.

3. In June of 2016, the WRF was asked to lead a track on developing curricula for theological education in Bangkok at the Global Proclamation Congress for Pastoral trainers on ***Accelerating Church Health***

Worldwide. This congress, which was co-hosted by the Lausanne Movement, the World Evangelical Alliance and the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education, and was attended by 3000 church leaders from 120 nations around the world.

4. In September of 2016, Dr. Buys made presentations in Queensland, Australia, on ***Missions in the Fear of God*** at conferences sponsored by WRF denominational member The Presbyterian Church of Australia. During the same month, Dr. Buys spoke on ***Biblical and Reformed Perspectives on Church Revitalization*** in Brisbane, Australia and on ***Missional Spirituality*** in Perth, Australia.

5. In August of 2017, the World Reformed Fellowship will be co-hosting a large conference in Arusha in Tanzania on ***Theological Education, Worship and Community Development in Africa***. About 400 church leaders from 20 African countries are expected to attend.

6. In September of 2017, WRF Associate International Director Sam Logan will make a presentation to the Presbytery of the East of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church on the subject, ***"The Continuing Global Scope and Legacy of the Reformation."***

7. In October of 2017, the WRF will host a major conference celebrating the 500th anniversary of the start of the Reformation. This conference will be held right in Wittenberg, Germany, where Martin Luther posted his 95 theses, during the last week of the month. Speakers at the conference will come from Brazil, The Czech Republic, England, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Scotland, South Korea, and the USA. The theme of the conference will be ***"The Global Impact of the Reformation and its Relevance for Continuing Reformation"*** and the conference is open to the public. The website for the conference (including registration material) may be found here - <http://wrf500wittenberg.org/> and a sheet describing the conference follows this material.

8. Recently, WRF congregational member Seventh Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, offered to provide scholarships for further theological study to WRF members. Those scholarships were available to students of any nationality and could be used at any recognized evangelical and Reformed theological college or seminary in the world. Forty applications were received from around the world and four scholarships were awarded. Also of significance is the fact that Seventh Reformed Church was the first church in the world officially to adopt the WRF "Statement of Faith" (available here - <http://wrfnet.org/about/statement-of-faith#.WEFOdoWcHIU>).

9. Lee Shelnutt was a representative of The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP), one of the denominational members of the WRF, to our 2015 General Assembly in Sao Paulo, Brazil. He recently wrote this to Dr. Samuel Logan, Associate International Director of the WRF, where both had spoken at the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland):

Sam, it was good to see you in Edinburgh. Hope the remainder of your time in Scotland was a refreshment to you. Just wanted to seek your prayers. I was honored at our General Synod to be elected to be the Moderator of the 2017 ARPC Synod. ***As I serve this next year as Moderator-Elect and then the next as Moderator*** I will need much wisdom and strength. I also intend to have as one of my emphases a promotion of world missions and the role that a small denomination like the ARPC can have in assisting other Reformed and Presbyterian bodies in other lands. ***That concern was only strengthened during my time at the WRF General Assembly*** (held in Sao Paulo, Brazil). The Lord's continued blessings upon you in your labors!

10. Peter Bakker, an officer of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, Liberated, wrote to Jim Richardson, a PCA (Presbyterian Church in America) representative at the WRF General Assemblies in both Edinburgh and Sao Paulo and Chairman of the Host Committee for the 2016 PCA General Assembly. He asked Mr. Richardson about the WRF because the PCA was one of the founding members

of the WRF and Mr. Bakker's denomination is considering joining the WRF. This was Mr. Richardson's response:

Peter,

So good to hear from you. Sounds like you've been doing a lot of research and planning. Glad to see you and BBK are looking to further your Christian fellowship and participation.

Your question to me as to why it is worthwhile for the PCA to be a member of WRF has many answers. The first and probably the most driving is that the PCA, The National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, and Presbyterian Church of Brazil were the guiding forces behind the concept of forming a fellowship of worldwide reformed believers. The PCA has provided many qualified individuals to work with the churches mentioned above and have sought to secure the best leadership and talent from our closest reformed denominations.

A second reason is ***that it was a vision the Lord had laid on the hearts of several individuals to make it a fellowship of worldwide reformed believers, not just an extension of one denomination, but God's church in union, working to further the gospel*** and to assist each other as they are capable.

A third reason is that it provides ***a platform for reformed churches to work and fellowship within and outside the bounds of individual denominational ties. It helps to open doors and generates trust knowing that everyone is working from and adhering to acceptable Christian statements, creeds, and standards.***

A fourth reason is that ***the WRF works through regional subgroups*** so those closest can respond to needs and share in events in a more timely and logical manner.

I have found it to be a great joy. It's all about networking, opening doors, and Christian fellowship. My association has been as a denominational delegate, but that will end June 2017 when my term on the IRC is completed. I am considering an individual membership but do not know what level of involvement that will generate. I will have to see what doors the Lord opens for me.

11) In early October of 2016, this e-mail was received from Jeff Jeremiah, Stated Clerk of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), one of our denominational members. Dr. Jeremiah represented the EPC at the WRF General Assemblies in Edinburgh, Scotland (2010) and Sao Paulo, Brazil (2015).

Dear Sam:

Mike Moses, Bill Enns, John Bueno and I were the EPC team that was hosted by the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico (INPM) at their General Assembly September 5-8. At this meeting we finalized our fraternal agreement that focuses on church planting in the US and NW Mexico. There are two articles on our website (www.epc.org) under the "EPNews" tab.

As we interacted with members of the INPM and leaders from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Peru, one of our members wondered if it would be helpful to convene a Latin America consultation on theological education. I responded that the Latin America group of ***WRF is probably the strongest one*** and that I'd contact you about this, which is what I'm doing!

12) In late October of this year, the 11th annual "Women in the Word: A Workshop," sponsored by the WRF, was offered at Calvary Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. The keynote speaker for this year's workshop was Mrs. Libbie Groves, a member of the faculty at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Women from 33 different church participated this year and the

total numbers from all of these workshops indicate that more than a thousand women from 150 different local congregations have been trained as teachers of Scripture through the workshops.

13) The following public statement was made by Rev. David Meredith, Past Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland (a denominational member of the WRF):

It is clear that the WRF is fast becoming the 'go to' organization for inter-church relations worldwide and we would certainly wish to support that in any way we can.

14) This is a request made to the WRF in late October of 2016 by Frank Sindler, a WRF member and a PCA (Presbyterian Church in America) missionary in West Africa:

Hi Sam, we've worked with a number of men in West Africa to form ***a network of national Presbyterian denominations. They would like to join WRF.*** What is the process for them officially joining? There are four national denominations each with 30-40 churches and a body of TEs ordained via the same process as the PCA. There is also a regional association of these denominations. ***Can the national denominations join as well as the regional organization? They also have an indigenous missions sending agency that is a subsidiary of MTW (the global missions agency of the PCA). Could it also join?***

[NOTE: The process described above is now well underway.]

15) We now (February 22, 2017) have 79 denominational members in 36 different countries around the world (***these denominations include three of the four largest Presbyterian denominations in all of North, South, and Central America***). We also have 122 congregational members, 198 organizational members (primarily seminaries and missions organizations), and 828 individual members. ***Altogether, our members live and minister in 84 different countries.***

16) Much of our global service is done via our website. In addition to the material mentioned above about ministry in the context of the global refugee crisis, some of the other items include the following:

A. A suggestion of twelve excellent ways in which WRF members and others from around the world might consider celebrating this, the 500th birthday of the Reformation.

B. A blog by WRF member Peter Jensen, former Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, on why and how the Reformation still matters.

C. Official reports from some of our denominational members about recent official actions of those denominations. Many of our denominations around the world are facing similar issues and this material reflects to similarities and differences of the ways in which evangelical Reformed denominations handle those issues.

D. Extensive material dealing with the global refugee crisis. We asked a number of our members, from different parts of the world, to write about this matter and they did so. What they wrote has now been posted on our website and distributed in a wide variety of other ways as well. That ***material was prepared by individuals and churches in these countries: Australia, The Czech Republic, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Mexico, Scotland, South Africa, and the United States of America.***

E. A report on the participation in Berlin, Germany, by WRF International Director Designate, Dr. Davi Charles Gomes, in meetings of the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief. ***The subject of the meeting was the problem of religious persecution of people on the grounds of faith or belief.***

F. A free download of ***“Human Rights: A Christian Primer,”*** a book written by Dr. Thomas Johnson, an individual member of the WRF and Senior Advisor to the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance.

G. A link to the video of a plenary presentation at the 2016 General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church on homosexuality. The speaker was Christopher Yuan who, is the co-author, with his mother, of ***Out of a Far Country: A Gay Son's Journey to God, A Broken Mother's Search for Hope.***

H. A case study in ***reaching Muslims for Christ*** which provides a description of the work of WRF congregational member Seventh Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. ***This work includes regular Gospel radio broadcasts in the Farsi language.***

I. ***Resources for safeguarding our churches and our children from sexual predators.*** This material was developed by Jim Gamble, a British expert in this field, who spoke at a WRF conference in Potchefstroom, South Africa, in 2013, and at the WRF General Assembly in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 2015. [Videos of both of those presentations are available on our website.]

J. Two items focusing on ***the recent strongly positive statement made by Pope Francis about Martin Luther, specifically with respect to Luther's teaching on justification by faith alone.*** Both items were provided by WRF members, one who was with the Pope when he made the statement and the other lives and ministers in Italy. They offer decidedly different interpretations of the Pope's comment about Luther and they thereby provide excellent complementary perspectives to our members around the world.