



# RISE TO LIFE

---

CONFESSING WITNESS TO LIFE-FLOURISHING COMMUNITIES

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION  
STRATEGY FRAMEWORK 2020-2029

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1. PREAMBLE</b> .....	<b>6</b>
1.7. CWM VALUES .....	7
<b>2. A PROPHETIC READING OF THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES</b> .....	<b>10</b>
2.4. PATRIARCHY, RACISM AND CHAUVINISTIC NATIONALISM .....	11
2.5. ECONOMIC INJUSTICE.....	12
2.6. CLIMATE CATASTROPHE.....	12
2.7. NEO-COLONIALISM - OCCUPATION, MILITARISATION, RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION .....	12
2.8. FORCED MIGRATION AND NATIVISM .....	13
2.9. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE 4TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION .....	13
<b>3. THEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS</b> .....	<b>14</b>
3.1. RISING TO LIFE: BREAKING OUT FROM BABYLON.....	14
3.2. AN INVITATION TO BOLD RESPONSES IN FAITH AND ACTION.....	16
<b>4. MISSIOLOGICAL MANDATE</b> .....	<b>17</b>
4.1. CONFESSING WITNESS TO LIFE FLOURISHING COMMUNITIES.....	17
4.2. LIFE-FLOURISHING CREATION .....	18
4.3. LIFE-FLOURISHING ECONOMY.....	18
4.4. LIFE FLOURISHING GROWTH AND ADVANCEMENT .....	19
4.5. LIFE-FLOURISHING SOCIETIES.....	19
4.6. LIFE-FLOURISHING SPIRITUALITIES.....	19
4.7. LIFE-FLOURISHING EVANGELISM .....	19
4.8. LIFE-FLOURISHING EDUCATION .....	20
4.9. LIFE-FLOURISHING CHURCH IN ACTION.....	20
4.10. LIFE-FLOURISHING ECUMENISM.....	20
<b>5. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE</b> .....	<b>21</b>
5.1. ALIGNMENT OF STRUCTURE WITH STRATEGY .....	21
5.2. WORKING PATTERN .....	23
<b>6. LOCATION CONSIDERATIONS</b> .....	<b>23</b>
6.1. IDEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION .....	23
6.2. STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS .....	25

<b>7. THEOLOGICAL AND MISSIOLOGICAL COMMITMENTS TO LIFE-FLOURISHING ECONOMY AND FINANCE FOR ALL .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>7.1. FAITH AND THE MANAGEMENT OF FINANCE.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>7.2. LIBERATING MONEY FOR MISSION.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>8. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>8.1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>8.2. GOAL .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>8.3. PRINCIPLES.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>8.4. COMMUNICATING THE STRATEGY .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>9. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>LIST OF ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS .....</b>	<b>31</b>

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAP – Academic Accompaniment Programme

DARE - Discernment and Radical Engagement

MMF – Members’ Mission Forum

MSP – Mission Support Programme

NIFEA – New International Finance and Economic Architecture

PIM – Partners in Mission

TEEL - Theological Education for Economy of Life

TIM – Training in Mission

YWET – Young Women Enabling Transformation

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

## **Artificial general intelligence (AGI)**

Refers to the intelligence of a machine that can understand or learn any intellectual task that a human can. Definitions of what "intelligence" means are contested but there is wide agreement that intelligence is required to reason, represent knowledge, plan, learn, communicate in a natural language, and integrate these skills towards a common goal.

## **Artificial intelligence (AI)**

In computer science, artificial intelligence (AI), sometimes called machine intelligence, is intelligence demonstrated by machines, in contrast to the natural intelligence displayed by humans. Colloquially, the term "artificial intelligence" is often used to describe machines (or computers) that mimic "cognitive" functions that humans associate with the human mind, such as "learning" and "problem solving". (edited from Wikipedia)

## **Artificial super intelligence (ASI)**

A superintelligence is a hypothetical agent that possesses intelligence far surpassing that of the brightest and most gifted human minds. If research produced sufficiently intelligent software, it would be capable of reprogramming and improving itself - "recursive self-improvement" - if the agent could achieve in an increasing cycle, it would lead to a superintelligence.

## **Babylon/Babylon system**

Babylon, mentioned in the Bible 260 times, second only to Jerusalem, was a city of great wealth, located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The story of Babylon is woven throughout the entirety of the Old Testament narrative. In the Old Testament, Babylon was a city; in the New Testament, Babylon is a spirit. In the Old Testament, the city of Babylon gave birth to an empire that ruled the known world and imposed a worldview upon all of the peoples that she conquered. She could be brutal; she could be proud and she thought she would reign forever.

For persecuted people in the early church, Babylon became the code name for their great oppressor, Rome. In contemporary culture, the term Babylon is referenced throughout reggae music and Rastafarian culture as the modern reality, or system of corruption and oppression. Babylon could signify the political state, the police, the church, or any corrupt or oppressive force.

## **Chauvinistic nationalism**

Chauvinism is an exaggerated form of patriotism and a belligerent belief in the superiority of one's nation. Another distinct feature of chauvinistic nationalism is the language of jingoism.

Chauvinism is very much the credo of the partisan and the prejudiced. It seeks to identify and denigrate the 'other' whilst celebrating the greatness of their own distinct nation. Chauvinism can reflect notions of racial hierarchy, intolerance and an irrational hatred of those who look and sound 'different.'

## **Empire**

A coming together of economic, cultural, political, and military power in our world today that constitutes a reality and spirit of lordless domination, created by humankind yet enslaving simultaneously; an all-encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while imperiously excluding even sacrificing humanity and exploiting creation; pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed- the worship of money, goods and possessions, the gospel of consumerism, proclaimed through powerful propaganda and religiously justified, believed and followed; the colonisation of consciousness; values and notions of human life by imperial logic; a spirit lacking in compassionate justice and showing contemptuous disregard for the gifts of creation and the household of life.

*(from the globalisation project- Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa and Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany)*

## **Economy of life**

This is a vision. An economy of life responds primarily to **people's needs** for life in community rather than saving private interests and desires. An economy of life is concerned about justice, that is, furthering right relationships in human community and the interaction with nature. It values cooperation rather than competitive individual achievement and seeks to provide opportunities of productive work for all. It emphasises participation of the people in decisions about production and distribution and assesses the value of products on the basis of use and sustainability rather than monetary gain in exchange. It seeks to build an economic order that respects human dignity, encourages solidarity and mutual accountability and serves the common good.

## **Fourth industrial revolution**

The phrase Fourth Industrial Revolution was first introduced by Klaus Schwab, the executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, 2016 in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland. Schwab includes in this fourth era technologies that combine hardware, software, and biology (cyber-physical systems), and emphasizes advances in communication and connectivity. Schwab expects this era to be marked by breakthroughs in emerging technologies in fields such as robotics, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, quantum computing, biotechnology, the internet of things, the industrial internet of things (IIoT), decentralized consensus, fifth-generation wireless technologies (5G), 3D printing and fully autonomous vehicles. (edited from Wikipedia)

## **Missio confessionis**

Missio Confessionis is the technical term for Confessing Witness. The Ecumenical movement at large, and Reformed community, in particular, have taken a kairoitic faith stance on the issues by which the very being of the church is defined. As in the case of *status confessionis*, concerning racial injustice, and *processus confessionis*, regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction, Missio Confessionis is CWM's decisive engagement in doing mission as an act of confessing faith.

## **Neo-colonialism**

This term is used to define the economic sabotage of developing countries propagated by developed countries and large multinational corporations, using capitalism, globalisation, and cultural forces to control a country in lieu of direct military or political control. Such control can be economic, cultural, or linguistic, by promoting one's own culture, language or media in the colony, corporations embedded in that culture can then make greater headway in opening the markets in those countries. The term is also linked to the dependency theories and colonisation of people's consciousness to follow the ideas of the colonisers. The dependency theory is a political concept which prescribes that wealthy countries channel resources from developing countries, benefitting themselves at the expense of these developing countries.

## **New international economic and financial architecture (NIFEA)**

New International and Financial Architecture (NIFEA) is a movement that seeks to replace the present system of unregulated market economy and unjust financial governance structures, with an economy of life that is based on the principles of economic, social and climate justice; that serves the real economy; accounts for social and environmental tasks and sets clear limits to greed.

## **Prosperity gospel**

It comes from prosperity theology (sometimes referred to as the prosperity gospel, the health and wealth gospel, the gospel of success, or seed faith) is a controversial religious belief among some Christians, who hold that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to religious causes will increase one's material wealth. Prosperity theology views the Bible as a contract between God and humans: if humans have faith in God, he will deliver security and prosperity.

The doctrine emphasises the importance of personal empowerment, proposing that it is God's will for his people to be blessed. The atonement (reconciliation with God) is interpreted to include the alleviation of sickness and poverty, which are viewed as curses to be broken by faith. This is believed to be achieved through donations of money, visualisation, and positive confession (from Wikipedia).

# INTRODUCTION

The 2020-2029 Strategy Framework is the outcome of a wide consultative process involving individuals and groups from a broad cross-section of the CWM family. The Board of Directors, at its March 2018 meeting, agreed on the planning process document and appointed a Strategic Planning Group (SPG) to lead this process. The SPG worked under the distinguished leadership of Professor Park Seong-Won, an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Korea, outstanding Church leader, social activist, academic and ecumenist.

In keeping with the decision of the Board which stipulates that the process be consultative, participatory and open, the SPG set out to engage a cross-section of individuals and groups spanning the entirety of CWM's community. The process also included our ecumenical partners and people's movements to obtain their insights in the reading of the signs of the time and discerning the direction for the next ten years of CWM's life. The responses, which were further analysed by working groups, have been immensely insightful and have provided meaningful data to inform the development of the Strategy Framework.

The 2010-2019 strategy framework had three major components:

1. Programme – aimed at enabling member churches to develop missional congregations; to express solidarity and prophetic witness to a world in chaos; and to deepen partnership and ecumenical engagement as a way of witnessing to God's justice in the world.
2. Location – in response to the 1977 decision to link location to the ideological shift in mission thinking and practice, thereby making London a temporary home for the new organisation.
3. Structural realignment in governance and management – to enable more effective accompaniment of member churches in doing God's mission.

In this exercise of discerning the path to the next ten years, all three aspects of the strategy underwent a review, and its outcome has influenced the SPG in formulating this strategy framework. The preliminary outcome of the programme evaluation has contributed to the reading of the signs of the times and has informed the shape of the missiological mandate. Both the location and the structural reviews are incorporated in the strategy framework and show the various nuancing of these over the years by the Board of Directors. Analysis of data collected from member churches as well as insights from working groups have affirmed the relevance of both the location and the governance reviews in the strategy framework for 2020-2029.

The strategy document offers CWM a challenging and inspiring future, which builds on our life and witness so far. The strategy is shaped around several key elements:

- A prophetic reading of the signs of the times
- A theological underpinning of our prophetic calling
- A missiological mandate for responding in faith and witness
- Key organisational implications and insights for governance, location, finance, and communication

This Strategy Framework is designed to guide the Board of Directors and Management in developing strategic plans of action for different stages along this ten-year trajectory as we explore specific ways in which God is calling us to engage with God's mission in the world. The framework does not dictate what the programme of CWM should be from year to year; nor does it dictate what member churches are doing in response to God in their contexts. Instead, it offers principles, signposts and insights, based on a reading of the signs of the time, our theological reflections on this reading and our discernment of their meaning for engagement with God's mission over the decade from 2020 onwards. It is hoped that member churches and ecumenical partners may draw inspiration and guidance from this framework for contextual engagement with God's mission as well.

CWM, through its Secretariat, will be guided and informed in discerning and developing programmes and activities for the different implementation phases of this framework; and to deepen the CWM strategy of working through member churches and in collaboration with ecumenical partners to bear faithful prophetic witness to the God of life. CWM also anticipates that member churches and ecumenical partners will benefit from this framework. This framework also invites them to engage with this collective reading of the global mission issues from their context, and thus to inform and shape the vision and practice of life-flourishing communities, rooted in justice and peace.

There are several appendices to this strategy framework, offering additional information and more detailed explication on aspects of the framework. Among them is the full report of the Legacies of Slavery Hearings, a project which was undertaken by CWM to expose complicities of London Missionary Society (LMS) with enslavement and colonisation; it offers CWM a clear mandate for making racial justice central to our work and witness as God's people. There are several recommendations in this report, and the Board of Directors, as well as the 2019 Annual Members Meeting, have authorised that these recommendations form part of the framework to inform CWM's mission throughout this coming decade.

This is an opportune moment for CWM. The theology statement, which is appended to this strategy framework, is a rallying call for all the people of God. "Rising to life: Breaking out from Babylon" is an invitation to rise with the Risen Jesus and to proclaim that death is defeated and "Babylon is as fallen as the tomb is empty". This statement is as audacious as it is subversive. It is intended to defy the forces and systems of death and destruction and to declare that Jesus alone is Lord. In articulating and affirming a theology of life, we assert that rather than succumbing to the gloom and doom that characterise so much of life as experienced by the majority, we will claim an alternative vision of hope and freedom. This alternative vision can only be claimed by resurrection people, people who, like those on the road to Emmaus, feel a strange warmth in our spirit as God meets us in the Risen Jesus and accompanies us in our struggle and search for meaning.

We commend this strategy framework to CWM and its member churches, our ecumenical partners and the wider Christian community. We pray that it will inspire us to rise with Jesus in the midst of forces and powers which despoil, destroy and deny God's vision of justice, love and

peace. By sharing in Jesus' daring and life-transforming mission, CWM can play its part with others in enabling the emergence of life-flourishing communities, where justice and peace are experienced by all. God has endowed the people of God with the spirit of resilience; and, accordingly, we share the theology of St Paul that invites God's resurrection power to make us a new people, a new movement which offers today the life and love of the coming new Heaven and new Earth:

But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. Ephesians 2: 13-20

Shalom!

Collin I. Cowan

**General Secretary**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CWM 2020-2029 strategy framework is the map of the missional journey to be pursued. The framework develops and reshapes the partnership in mission model that has guided CWM since 1977. Global Christian witness is changing; the voices of persons in risky and vulnerable places need to be heard. The framework is also informed by data provided by CWM's diverse communities, which the SPG and its working groups used, as well as its own reading of the signs of the times. The resulting framework has clear missional perspectives. It also comments on governance, finance, location and communication. A theology statement – *Rising to Life: Breaking out from Babylon*, a faith stance on commitment to mission – *Missio Confessionis*, a financial mission framework – *Theological and Missiological Commitments to Life-Flourishing Economy and Finance for All* and the Legacies of Slavery project report and recommendations are accompanying resources.

The framework invites the CWM community to boldly confess its faith and allegiance “to the God of life” and to reaffirm its commitment to follow Jesus in radical discipleship. It seeks relationships with fellow pilgrims on the journey, to enable liberating and transforming witness to life-flourishing communities in the name of Jesus. Central to this framework is the understanding and commitment of CWM to work through its member churches. Accordingly, the framework offers space for member churches to interact and draw insights into their context and mission. Additionally, there are several intersections where CWM, through the Board of Directors and Management, will interface with member churches as part of the intentional thrust of being together in mission. It requires radical ecumenical reorientation as the means by which CWM and its member churches will be challenged and enabled to embrace and engage ecumenism as a tool for learning and growth.

Under section 4, Missiological Mandate (pg. 19-23), there are nine issue-based themes, reflecting the groanings and cries of the Earth. These themes constitute the framework around which strategic plans, programmes and activities will be developed to guide the mission of CWM for the next ten years. It is anticipated that the full strategy framework, with all its accompanying documents, will offer the foundation for different plans of actions along the ten-year trajectory. This framework invites and encourages member churches, ecumenical partners and peoples' movements to avail themselves to be conscientised and equipped to witness to the life-transforming power of the Spirit of God, rising to life with Jesus of Nazareth, penetrating strongholds of death and destruction and declaring that “Babylon is as fallen as the tomb is empty”. Accordingly, this framework is a clarion call for all followers of Jesus to embody a radical lifestyle, inspired by the “audacious hope” of breaking out of Babylon and rising to life with Jesus; and to respond to the signs of the time, which call us to witness to life-flourishing communities, reflecting New Heaven and New Earth.

We present this framework as the roadmap to inform the missional engagement of CWM for the period 2020-2029. We commend it to our member churches, to the wider ecumenical community and to all people of goodwill who are committed to justice and peace, who seek to restore the Earth and rebuild broken humanity.

In the words of the prophet Isaiah we have a vision of life-flouring communities in which all of God's creation come together in peace, the Earth flourishes and God's glory is revealed:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. <sup>5</sup>And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." (Isaiah 40: 3-5).

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand in the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the Earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11: 6-9).

# 1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1. The Council for World Mission is a worldwide partnership of Christian churches. The 32 members are committed to sharing their resources of people, insights, gifts and money, to carry out God's mission globally and locally. CWM was created in 1977 and incorporates the London Missionary Society (1795), the Commonwealth Missionary Society (1836) and the (English) Presbyterian Board of Missions (1847). CWM has since its formation served as a worldwide community, and has challenged, encouraged and equipped its member churches as partners in God's mission, as revealed in the life and work of Jesus Christ.
- 1.2. This international mission organisation has arrived at a significant juncture in its journey. There is a clear and present danger to life on earth: because human actions are causing terrible climate change; because of profound economic and ecological injustice; and because this is an era of intense technological challenge. CWM faces these threats by reaffirming its identity, vocation and witness as a postcolonial, justice-centred community of disciples of Jesus. This crisis leaves no room for neutrality or tinkering at the edges. A decisive and radical response is required to restore and renew the Earth. This framework, therefore, reflects CWM's commitment to address this crisis by reasserting its understanding and practice of mission as a discipleship journey of confessing witness to life flourishing communities.
- 1.3. This framework seeks, further, to move beyond the model of mission as partnership, to a deeper, more outward-looking, more ecumenical mission identity. At its core, CWM's mission strategy works through member churches. They and their congregations constitute the base. There, mission takes root, transforming the lives of ordinary people, renewing local communities and restoring creation. CWM believes that authentic missional witness of local churches and congregations must remain a central feature of its life. Equally, this witness must propel the followers of Jesus into ecumenical engagement (at local, national, regional and international levels). Such solidarity can resist threats to life and enable alternative life-affirming actions. This deeper ecumenical witness is to involve joining forces with social movements, indigenous peoples and peoples of other faiths.
- 1.4. In our time, global ecumenical action against principalities and powers of darkness is facing political, economic and religious opposition from powerful interest groups and corporations. Yet CWM occupies an "Esther missional space" – indeed an "Easter missional space" – in forging a new agenda.<sup>1</sup> New agenda should, in turn, be reflected in CWM's governance

---

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to Esther 4:14, 'for such a time as this': critical times call for bold action. And as "Esther" echoes with "Easter", these actions are to embody and declare the resurrection message of life and freedom.

structure, making room for others to be welcomed and to participate in God's liberative work. If our mission is to join in the liberation that the gospel of Christ offers for all creation, then new networks must be forged. Many peoples' and social movements serve the cause of peace and justice beyond the traditional ecumenical landscape. An intentional widening of the circle for prophetic witness of CWM, to travel with these movements on the next phase of our journey, is a vital opportunity and calling.

1.5. This framework affirms CWM's core vision of "fullness of life, through Christ, for all creation". It invites all churches to prophetic witness, proclaiming and living out God's justice where creation groans. It calls for radical evangelism and discipleship, a commitment to decisive action in living out the values of God's liberative alternatives and resisting the deadly forces of empire and sin.

1.6. Evangelism, as a spiritual calling, centres one in deep relationship with Jesus, God incarnate; ignites passion for renewal and transformation; fires up purpose for radical discipleship; and informs holistic witness to life-flourishing communities. The evangelical calling of the Church is to mirror the practice of Jesus of Nazareth in his invitation to the people he encountered to become part of the "kingdom of God", the alternative community; and to join him to live out God's justice and peace. (Romans 14: 17-18, Matthew 25: 34-36) In some places, evangelism has been neglected or reduced to proselytisation, the "saving (and owning) of souls". This understanding is far removed from Jesus' call to discipleship, requiring those who responded to leave old allegiances, alliances and patterns of behaviour, to become part of a life-flourishing community in juxtaposition to the Roman empire, the religious institution of the Judaizers and the social hierarchies of the day. In Jesus' community, the hungry are fed without their dignity trampled upon, the oppressed are released from bondage, the prisoners are freed, the oppressive forces of power are exorcised and unjust systems and structures are confronted and challenged. In so doing, Jesus intended that a new pattern of living would emerge, a social framework in which God's grace and love found expression in community (Luke 4: 18 – 20). It is to this radical discipleship that the first followers of Jesus were called and this remains the fundamental task of evangelism today. As this strategy framework takes into account the call from member churches to make evangelism a priority, it points towards a discipleship that engages with the world, challenges it and changes it.

## 1.7. CWM Values

1.7.1. This is a kairos moment for CWM. The changing landscape of global Christianity is facing new challenges and opportunities. These challenges require mission agencies and churches to explore their values. The underlying core values that guided CWM since 1977 and informed its relationship with others in doing God's mission are:

- Justice in relationship
- Mutuality, equality and interdependence
- Generosity of spirit

- Unity in diversity

1.7.2. The key question is, *what more is needed to deepen the core values of CWM in order to guide the future work?* Here are some guidelines:

### 1.7.2.1. **Spiritual values**

#### ***i. Jesus and the world***

CWM seeks values rooted in the Gospel. Jesus lived full of truth and grace, despite the forces and limitations imposed on him by political and religious powers. He was often challenged by authorities who benefitted from the status quo. Yet he entered these challenges from the side of the marginal, to affirm that Good News was preached *to and from* the poor.

Jesus spoke for the *world as it is created to be*, where all life, systems and relationships are redeemed, transformed and realized in the love of God. This *world, as it is created to be*, is both elusive and powerful, as it takes shape among us. We discover it in moments of community and grace, in the dawning of change when all seems hopeless. When people turn again to God's life of justice and peace, then creation is made new (2 Cor 5:17). Followers of Jesus seek and speak for a new world.

#### ***ii. In Babylon but not of Babylon***

Jesus lived *in* Empire, but he was not *of* Empire. He is one of the exiled people of God, just as the ancient prisoners in Babylon were called to plant their gardens and pray for Babylon (Jer 29:5ff). God's people have a vision and a hope which are filled with the grace and truth of the alternative Heaven and Earth. **CWM and the churches must watch that we do not model our life and working on Babylon and fall prey to hierarchies of domination and self-interest.**

#### ***iii. In but not of injustice***

The mission agenda of CWM is set by 'signs of the times', by the injustices we witness in Babylon. Yet there is a constant and sinful tendency in the church to ally itself with power and become complicit in injustice. The Legacies of Slavery project has shown us our deep failings in regard to race. Yet in other areas too – Gender, Sexual Identity, Ability, Caste and Class – our values and prejudices need scrutiny. **CWM and the churches must watch that we do not repeat past sins and do not use our rhetoric to de-humanise others or profit from power.**

#### ***iv. In but not of money***

CWM has resources that do not depend on the giving of member churches. It can resource member churches as well as develop a strong core programme. Yet this tremendous privilege has risks and dangers. Money, as the means for our programme, may threaten to become the medium of our partnership. We need integrity when dealing with money, a capacity to use it creatively, and a critical awareness of its power to dominate and deceive. **As money is the principal power of Babylon, CWM needs to watch, lest our power over money distorts our life and relationships.**

**v. *In but not of today***

To be *in* today but not *of* today is an act of hope. Babylon manufactures despair, telling us there is no alternative. Yet voices of protest in the world, who know the wrong of today, are filled with the hope of tomorrow. The earth offers its fruitfulness today for the harvest of tomorrow. Jesus came into the today of Empire to enact the tomorrow of the kingdom. **CWM needs to watch that it is committed to the new Heaven and Earth so that our work will bring change rather than just preserving interests and assets.**

**1.7.2.2. Values in relationship**

- i. During the previous strategic era (2010-2019) CWM member churches moved on from a safe and domestic “partnership in mission” model to a more radical “mission as mutual accompaniment”.
- ii. The data for the present strategic process reveal that Members want CWM both to walk with them in engaging their contexts and to attend to important global issues. Mission as Accompaniment speaks of shared pilgrimage, deep conversation, strong relational ties, mutual support, and shared commitment to advocacy and action. Disciples of Jesus are “companions on the road”, bearing each other’s burdens, walking together amid the disappointment, discontent and uncertainties of life. “If you go alone, you go fast. If you go together, you go far.” Mission as Accompaniment calls us to a long journey together, weeping and celebrating, learning from and with one another, helping all to achieve the life, wholeness and community that God offers.
- iii. This framework of understanding and practice can enable CWM to grow deeper in God’s mission and bolder in faith. All of us – churches, Board, secretariat – are disciples of Jesus. We will deal and belong together as companions, who have key parts to play in the mission Jesus leads.
- iv. ***We are together in mission in sorrow and joy***  
Our mutuality requires that we uphold each other in struggle as well as in celebration. Our work together should build and affirm community.
- v. ***We are together in mission with Jesus and each other***  
Jesus calls many to follow him and reveals himself in the lives of many beyond our circles. Our work together should honour the many Jesus calls, heeding especially those silenced at the margins of our churches and communities.
- vi. ***We are together in mission as ‘companions on the road’ ready for new directions***  
The language of mission can conceal the fact that we fear change or seek our own institutional well-being. Yet Jesus challenges us to take new directions. Our work needs to build trust in the new possibilities that the Spirit is producing in our times. If a mission organisation cannot take risks, who will?

- vii. For we are together in mission to **dismantle the inequalities that are masked by our complicity with Babylon**. Our partnership language can mask deep inequalities among us. Some of our churches are living from the profits of Babylon's economy while others are punished by it. Some of our churches come from communities which accept the privileges of race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, ordination, caste and class. In the work of the coming strategy, CWM's values must challenge and overcome these divisions, distinctions and complicities.

### 1.7.2.3. Values in practice

- i. The CWM *partnership in mission* model of engagement emerged as a post-colonial response to the past Euro-centric models of mission and missionary engagement. It argued for justice in the sharing of power and resources in the practice of mission. Significant progress has been achieved over the years, transforming CWM into a more just organisation serving its member churches.
- ii. However, this model of partnership in mission is limited in what it can do. To some extent, it was driven by the self-interest of a group of churches. As it limited engagement beyond the member churches, it robbed this small community of churches of the exposure and vitality that the wider ecumenical community can offer. More importantly, it prevented us from making alliances for the sake of the kingdom. For although this partnership model assumed a deep sense of respect and openness for every partner to move into the local and global contexts without suspicion, there was often a greater concern for autonomy and independence of each member of the partnership.
- iii. Yet today's threats to the Earth and all that live in it cannot be challenged by individual churches. Therefore, the new strategy framework invites a radical shift in CWM's understanding and practice of mission. It calls for willingness and openness to build relationships among members and ecumenical partners. Additionally, this strategy asks fresh questions about how and where God is at work in the world today.

## 2. A PROPHETIC READING OF THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

- 2.1. This reading of our times takes into account that although the world is experiencing major threats to life, there are also many counter-stories of resistance. People are dreaming dreams, imagining a different world, building alternative communities of hope, and restoring the earth. The CWM community of churches stands for hope as it continues to bear witness against imperial systems of death. Around the world, ordinary people are

rising up to life in resistance against such systems. On every continent, leaders are having to face the strength of ordinary people who are relentless in saying no to systems of oppression. CWM celebrates and stands with those who resist oppressive forces and contribute to liberation and equality. CWM offers its reading of the times as more than an agenda for work, or a 10-year strategy framework. Rather it serves as a means to provoke and inspire churches to rise up in faith and to embody and declare the new creation. Critical confession of faith and radical discipleship come together in this vision and theology.

2.2. We live in a time of deep crisis. Environmental damage, economic injustice and human brokenness threaten all life and point to total annihilation. The economic, political and social systems are broken and lead to division, inequality and injustice; yet the claim is that these systems are the only way to development, peace and prosperity. We see instead that the rich get richer, and dominant interest groups and elites create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. Political and religious leaders, influenced by autocratic authoritarianism and right-wing religious fundamentalism, are stirring up hostilities, hatred and tension. New economic systems entrench inequality for those who already profit most; and, in the shape of Artificial Intelligence, pose deep questions about humanness. Prejudice and violence are on the rise, particularly against those who do not fit the dominant norms of our societies, like women, children, black people, Dalits, sexual minorities, Indigenous people and people living with disabilities. Individuals and institutions that promote equality provide care to the poorest and work to protect the earth's resources are targeted and discredited.

2.3. CWM sees these as the poisonous fruits of systems we confront as Empire. They are the results of the systems, desires, legacies, profits and aims of dominant and domineering people and interests. They are rooted in the histories of our countries as well as in the current systems we live by. They are not accidental but the deliberate actions of those who do not want to see economies, ecologies and communities that sustain all life. These systems are designed to maximise profit, protect vested interests, prevent true peace and deny justice. Indeed, they are idolatrous because they suppress the inherent image of God in all of life. Therefore, it is vital that faith communities out-think, out-work and out-live these values and systems with life-flourishing alternatives. CWM calls on its member churches and partners to turn to the God of Jesus and to rise to life, breaking out from Babylon to witness to the new world that the God of love and justice is forming amongst us.

## 2.4. Patriarchy, racism and chauvinistic nationalism

2.4.1. Gender-based violence, racial violence, ecological violence and homophobic violence are on the increase in many contexts; and the trade in humans as slaves is also returning with new face and force. Chauvinistic nationalism has captured the political will of many nations. Homophobic and gender violence is a global phenomenon, and in many jurisdictions, these abuses are sanctioned in law. Minorities are being scapegoated in many contexts. Even faith communities, including churches, have fostered violence and discrimination. Civic visions of nation-building for all have been usurped by exclusivist

interests, which threaten minorities and migrants. International consensus on key justice issues – climate change, peace, human rights – is at risk.

## 2.5. Economic injustice

2.5.1. The global economy is marked by spiralling inequality even though it promises wealth for all. According to Oxfam, in 2018, 1% of the world's population owned 82% of the world's wealth. The pursuit of profit for this 1% drives most of our economies and the global corporations central to them. Global capitalism is a particular legacy of Western colonisation and of slavery. The colonisation of the world by the white Western nations produced and entrenched economic advantage which perpetuates inequality and exploitation then and now. Patriarchy is more than a domestic and social force; it is also an economic force. Under economic injustice, we see that wealth models patriarchal interests and histories. Women are paid significantly less than men and rewarded less in the labour market. Churches too have become captive to desires for riches and profit. Some newer churches have advocated the seductive message of a popular Prosperity Gospel; while the older churches protect their institutions and financial interests. Our economic system is also ecocidal and driving the earth to a climate catastrophe.

## 2.6. Climate catastrophe

2.6.1. We are already in the grip of human-caused climate change, and its impact is catastrophic. Temperature increase, sea-level rise, shrinking ice coverage, and frequent extremes of weather lead to species extinction, food insecurity and land loss and threaten above all the vulnerable. The years 2015 to 2018 are the four warmest on record. The 19 hottest years ever documented have all occurred since 1998. And as we await the figures for 2019, there are longer-term signs that earth's climate will worsen profoundly, affecting the sustainability of life, despite some efforts at environmental controls. Our planet is now in the midst of its sixth mass extinction of plants and animals — the sixth wave of extinctions in the past half-billion years. All this is the product of a carbon-centred economy, which believes that even on a planet of finite proportions, profit and production should grow without limit. Industrialization pollutes the earth and the seas. Devotion to a cheap consumer economy results in low wages, cheap goods and the exploitation and impoverishment of the working class. This suggests that people and planet are entirely at the disposal of the rich and powerful. Commitment to economic and climate justice is required to inform the critique of the death-dealing force of empire.

## 2.7. Neo-colonialism - Occupation, Militarisation, Religious persecution

2.7.1. The Empire's manipulation of geographical borders belies the violence at the heart of its methods of conquest and control. In order for its neo-colonialism to be sustained, Empire uses its brutal military machine. Meanwhile co-opted religious allies develop propaganda and foment persecution.

2.7.2. In 2015, the World Bank estimated that 1.2 billion people, roughly one-fifth of the world's population, are affected by some form of violence or insecurity. The Stockholm

International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimates that almost \$1.7 trillion was spent on militarisation in 2016. 10 per cent of this would be enough to fund the UN Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty and hunger by 2030. Religious conflict continues to rise at communal, national and international levels. One-third of the world's population meet hostility because of their religious affiliation, be they Christians, Muslims, Jews or people of other faith traditions. We discern the violence and dissension of Babylon at work in all of this. It comes as a deliberate effort to undo the work and progress of de-colonising, to prevent civil and human rights movements challenging the violence of the powers and posing alternative visions of human community.

## 2.8. Forced migration and nativism

2.8.1. Up to 68.5 million people are migrants and refugees fleeing conflict, poverty and climate disaster in the world today. These refugees are reviled and resented by populations and politicians who favour the interests of native inhabitants over immigrants and safeguard their own social infrastructure against foreign invasion. This is further exacerbated by policies of austerity imposed after the 2007/8 financial meltdown. Climate change, already a growing driver of migration, forcing families to flee water scarcity, crop failure and rising sea levels, may cause as many as 143 million people to be displaced by 2050, (See World Bank report, 'Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration'). Vested economic, political and religious interests intentionally employ racist and xenophobic policies against perceived threats of migrants, minorities and non-nationals. The rise of populist nationalism is a product of widespread loss of faith in establishment politics that privilege elites, as well as the offensive, xenophobic rhetoric of extremist ideologues. The fact is that neither of these political ideologies or approaches benefits the majority who are already the victims of systemic evil in all its forms.

## 2.9. Digital Transformation, Artificial Intelligence and the 4th Industrial Revolution

2.9.1. The First Industrial Revolution used water and steam power to mechanize production. The Second used electric power to create mass production. The Third used electronics and information technology to automate production. Now, a Fourth Industrial Revolution is building on the Third, the digital revolution that has been occurring since the middle of the last century. It is characterized by a fusion of technologies that blurs the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres. In addition, the breadth and depth of these changes herald the transformation of entire systems of production, management, and governance. Breakthroughs in health care can lead to healthier lives and longer life spans. However, the key questions will be: "In whose interests will these changes occur and who will benefit or may afford them? Can this divided, divisive system deliver for the whole of the community or the earth?" The objectification of people and planet for the sake of power and progress has done great harm, and the values beneath the 4thIR will be no different from the 3rd, which is, for example, deeply complicit with colonisation and enslavement. The central theological question may well be, "In the midst of such radical social, economic and cultural changes and developments, what will happen to our

humanity and spirituality, and moreover, the Triune God in whom we believe?” Artificial intelligence reinforces power and privilege and constitutes a potent threat to democratic governance. Its computational surveillance empowers the already powerful; and unaccountable data-rich corporations and governments seek greater security controls over citizens. AI markets itself as a technological system that aims to provide better quality of life and to take the poor out of poverty. Yet its growing encroachment on what it means to be human poses serious ethical, moral, theological and educational perils. If these are left unchecked, human social and emotional competencies may be compromised; and relationship-building between human and human and with the natural world will be undermined.

### 3. THEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

#### 3.1. Rising to Life: Breaking out from Babylon

*Go out from Babylon, go free! Shout the news gladly; make it known everywhere: “The Lord has saved his servant Israel!” (Isaiah 48:20)*

*He called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! (Rev. 18:2)*

3.1.1. The above prophetic word and visionary claim are echoed in the disciples’ Pentecostal response to the resurrection of Jesus.

This theological underpinning, more fully articulated in the attached theology statement, is a framework for the CWM community to fashion its work in the period 2020 – 2029 by giving in-depth attention to:

*Rising with the Risen Jesus whose Resurrection is insurrection and proclamation that Babylon is as fallen as the tomb is empty  
and...*

*Responding in Radical Discipleship where we live out the New Heaven and New Earth in the midst of a violent, abused and grieving world as signs of transforming love.*

3.1.2. The Core missional task of this discipleship commitment necessitates:

*Nurturing communities living the urgency of the Risen Life on the streets, seas, lands and territories of Babylon, witnessing the uprising of the Spirit as she brings into being the New Heaven and New Earth in our midst: at one with the God of Life in arising, shining, planting, praying, singing, dancing and embodying alternatives to empire’s death and destruction.*

3.1.3. In response to the changing global land and sea-scape, there is an urgent need to rethink the theology, prophetic calling and vocation of mission agencies and the Church. The Theology Statement is entitled: “*Rising to Life: Breaking out from Babylon*”. It speaks to

the call for radical discipleship by all who follow the God of Jesus, to rise up and resist the deadly forces that are deny fullness of life to the entire creation.

- 3.1.4. Living amongst oppressive systems and forces is to live in Babylon. God's people have lived before in the ancient city of Babylon as witnessed in the narratives of scripture. 'Babylon' is a synonym for empire, oppression and judgement, desolation and despair. The "Babylon system" undid rogue powers such as kings, unmasked false prophets, and brought despair to prophets, of God, the collapse of a nation, the loss of covenantal hope and the disintegration of a people's theology. During the different epochs of the Babylonian imperial reign, God never failed to raise up prophetic witnesses to resist its false sovereignty. Occupied by the logic, spirit and avarice of Babylon, God's people laboured in evil and misapprehension, awaiting a moment, a movement and a messiah to announce Babylon is fallen.
- 3.1.5. For persecuted people in the early church, Babylon became the code name for the great oppressor, Rome. In naming Rome 'Babylon', empire's horror and its pretension and futility are named all at once in stories which recall that God can transform crisis into liberation. These stories and the communities who lived by them spoke challenge to the powers of oppression, announced the sovereignty of God over all creation, and heralded God's coming reign of justice, peace and love.
- 3.1.6. In his ministry and mission, Jesus walked and served in the light and power of God's Spirit, manifested in miracles of healing. However, it was in resurrection that God asserted sovereign authority over the power of death. Death does not and will not have the last word over life! Empire's finest soldiers guarded the tomb in which the body of Jesus laid, but their security system was powerless in stopping his resurrection. Rising to life speaks of a Christ-centred faith and a discipleship in which his power and Spirit are witnessed. Rising to life, breaking out from Babylon is rooted in a Jesus-centred Spirituality in which we walk in the light of God. Disciples are called into companionship with each other and with God, sharing in the movement God leads towards creation, bringing fullness of life to the emptiness of death.
- 3.1.7. "Babylon" is a coded term, which the contemporary church may use as a proven biblical lens to view, critique and overcome the principalities and powers of empire. In this era of threat and fear, Babylon again serves to describe a potent life-destroying imperial force, built upon idolatries of power and self-righteousness. Today's followers of the God of the risen Jesus are invited to a spiritual insurrection through and by the power of the Spirit, refusing to worship the deceptive and false golden statues of mammon.
- 3.1.8. In this theological response to the signs of the times, CWM identifies the poisonous fruits of Empire and its insatiable appetite for profit, dominance, mechanistic dehumanization of peoples and destruction of the ecology. Such poisonous fruits are rooted in the histories and legal systems by which nations are defined as developed. These are

idolatrous systems that deny justice, maximise profit, create “ungods” and attempt to destroy life.

3.1.9. CWM’s missional duty, through its member churches and in partnership with other liberative religious and faith communities, is to re-present Jesus of Nazareth, to promote life-flourishing alternative visions, values and approaches. Rising to life and breaking out from Babylon is costly witness to the new world of love, justice and peace that God announced in Jesus. The followers of this resurrected Jesus embrace a spirituality of resistance that is permanently open, supportive and welcoming to all who are crucified and de-humanised by Babylon. They are the Jesus communities, the communities he enabled and for which he was crucified. The empty tomb is a threat to Babylon, a sign of defiance and a daring declaration that Babylon has fallen and the people of faith are rising as a counter-creating force.

## 3.2. An invitation to bold responses in faith and action

3.2.1. **We are not alone!** There are other partners and communities with whom God’s Spirit is at work. The scale and urgency of the issues around us demand costly covenantal response in faith and solidarity action. This is a covenant and a solidarity for life, for Christ’s life, Creation’s life, as we participate in God’s transforming love. Fundamental to this are the 50,000 communities of hope and possibility in which CWM member churches are situated; in addition to the cloud of witnesses of the ecumenical community. CWM’s mission theology and strategy look to these places as central to the falling of Babylon and the rising of a New Heaven and New Earth, as we resist and “chant down Babylon”.

3.2.2. **We will work together so there can be Arising.** Communities, who proclaim Jesus is Lord also proclaim the reality of God’s vision for the world despite the stubborn and prevailing forces of Babylon. These are communities that stand up and stand out, who find in our faith and vision of justice the courage to arise despite all that which presses us down.

3.2.3. **We will work together so there can be Shining.** Communities that shine witness in word and deed to the good news of the God of Jesus coming amongst us. God’s life gives us hope and joy in believing. As others see the light in us, it will reveal the deeper truths of the Gospel of peace at work in our world.

3.2.4. **We will work together so there can be Planting.** Communities which are busy planting, literally and metaphorically, will create and nurture change for the environment, the economies, communities amid the attitudes of hate, phobia and violence.

3.2.5. **We will work together so there can be Praying.** Our praying signifies worship as subversive, resisting Caesar. We proclaim that Jesus Christ alone is Lord, not the false gods that oversee the imperial systems of Babylon, co-opt our lives and endanger the earth.

- 3.2.6. **We will work together so there can be Singing.** Our singing signifies that we are also communities of celebration, mocking Babylon through acts of praise to God. We have the joy of the Gospel and the power of the Spirit to fill and inspire us. In a deeply wounded world, there are still wonders that we celebrate and sing out.
- 3.2.7. **We will work together so there can be Dancing.** This is a dance that can “*trample down Babylon*” when we are empowered by the Spirit of God. This is a dance of protest and of proclamation as we join hands and hearts with others to declare that change is come.
- 3.2.8. CWM embraces the hope of a world that is coming, in order to be sent into the world as it is. The 50,000 local communities that constitute the CWM family are called by God, with others, to be agents of liberation and change, witnessing to the transforming power of Jesus. These witnesses declare that Babylon is fallen as Jesus rises amongst us, breathes his Spirit on us and sends us out to bring peace to a wounded, divided, but deeply loved world. These communities embody alternatives to empire’s death and destruction. The good news of Jesus overcoming the works of Empire continues to transform the lives of ordinary people in local communities, giving cause to rise out of Babylon and proclaim the day of jubilee.

## 4. MISSIOLOGICAL MANDATE

### 4.1. Confessing Witness to Life Flourishing Communities

- 4.1.1. Given the signs of the times reading above, the following questions present themselves: 1) How should the global community, including Christians, position itself to claim the moment and to confront and overcome the crises? 2) How can a spirit of visionary and prophetic mission rise up in the Church of Jesus Christ? 3) How do we both confront these crises and offer alternatives which create change? Therefore, what should be the priorities of CWM and its members as it seeks to witness to the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ in this era?
- 4.1.2. The invitational theme of this framework is based on a reading of the times that life on this planet faces a clear, present and future danger. This necessitates a radical shift in prophetic understanding and mission engagement. The vision for CWM over the next 10 years necessitates alliances, engaging churches and peoples’ movements. It requires a rediscovery of human identity, in the image of God, in an era of egotistic, mechanistic and technocratic dehumanization and ecological degradation. It envisions the affirmation and embracing of Spiritualities, the reshaping of Economies, the restoration of Ecology and the renewal of the Global space into Life-Flourishing communities. This is the mission to which Jesus committed himself and which encompasses his declaration that “I am come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10: 10, NIV).

- 4.1.3. In pursuit of radical discipleship, CWM commits itself to a process of ‘Confessing Mission’. *Missio Confessionis* acknowledges our identity as a mission community with an ecumenical agenda for such a time as this. It invites us to confess boldly our allegiance to the God of life, to seek and build relationships with fellow pilgrims, and to build solidarity for liberative, transformative and life flourishing witness in the name of Jesus. In this regard, CWM is taking a faith stance in being a mission community. In confessing witness to life-flourishing communities, CWM in its various manifestations will embrace the *Missio Confessionis* as a matter of faith; and will give favourable consideration to the missional imperatives for the next 10 years that are contained therein.
- 4.1.4. Whenever human community has been faced with kairotic challenges, the Church of Jesus Christ, particularly with Reformed tradition, has made a faith stance by making a Confession. Barmen Declaration, Belhar Confession, Accra Confession and many more faith manifestos in different contexts have been made throughout history. In this kairotic moment CWM, in response to the groanings of this age, commits itself and calls upon its member churches and the wider ecumenical community to engage in radical discipleship, as expression of faith and witness to enable **Life-Flourishing Communities**.
- 4.1.5. This flourishing is a Christ-like act of resistance to Babylon. In Isaiah 65:17-24, the ‘New Heaven and New Earth’ was envisioned as an alternative community in which God-given life was guaranteed, justice assured and peace experienced. Jesus embraced this vision when he declared that the object of his mission was to offer ‘*Life in fullness to all.*’ Therefore, the quest for ‘*Life in Fullness*’ is central to bearing witness to the liberating Gospel of Jesus. Accordingly, in framing the missional agenda for this next strategy period, CWM will engage in ways that are **life** flourishing, **justice** supporting and **peace** affirming.

## 4.2. Life-Flourishing Creation

- 4.2.1. CWM’s core missional agenda will enable churches to participate in creating Life-Flourishing communities, reflecting ecological integrity and climate justice. This is not a matter of environmental advocacy, but of faith in God, the Creator, and of stewardship and witness in faithfulness to the God of life. There is urgency to this work, which must form part of the strategy framework for CWM in this next decade.

## 4.3. Life-Flourishing Economy

- 4.3.1. The planet on which we live needs a new order of financial and economic governance. A neo-liberal model continues to dominate the global economy, with increasingly negative consequences – for example, socio-economic inequality and polarization, ecological destruction, a culture of violence at all levels of society, insecurity of employment. The NIFEA process, leading to the development of TEEL (Theological Education for an Economy of Life), is an example of an alternative economy of life, which will be necessary as a deliberate strategy for overcoming injustice. This is a matter of urgent faith confession and of action to live out the Accra Confession.

#### 4.4. Life Flourishing Growth and Advancement

4.4.1. The uncontrollable power of technology, including surveillance Capitalism, dominates the global economy and is fundamentally challenging what it means to be human. Human rights, responsibilities and freedoms are being compromised. Computational surveillance has become a powerful tool of unaccountable governments and corporations to deny citizens their freedom. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has emerged as a major challenge, which will make far-reaching changes to life. It will not only change the 'what' and the 'how' of doing things, but also 'what' /who we are as humans. Since fusion science seeks not only to integrate what is given in nature but also to create new and different biological components, the 4thIR aims at, ultimately, artificially creating life. Human beings will become Human Creator, Homo Deus. This technological age is challenging not only humanity's view of itself but also its view of God. Therefore, CWM will pay attention to the Fourth Industrial Revolution as critical to its mission in this period and will respond to this challenge to human identity and purpose as a matter of faith and confession.

#### 4.5. Life-Flourishing Societies

4.5.1. Abolishing walls and barriers among people of colour, race, class, culture, and gender was the key revolutionary action of the early Church community that Jesus initiated. The mission model bequeathed to the contemporary church calls for alternative communities that bear witness to economic rule, justice-centred value system, people-inspired political direction, permission-giving ethos for life in communities, and generosity of spirit in relationships. CWM will explore ways to be differently organized on the basis of life-flourishing values, principles and ethos that are daring in addressing issues such as Legacies of Slavery and racism, Gender injustice, LGBTQ, and homophobia, disabilities and Caste; religious persecution; and committed to engagement with churches that nurtures renewed relevance in being church in a pluralistic society.

#### 4.6. Life-Flourishing Spiritualities

4.6.1. Through increasing commodification of life, the core values of Christian spirituality have become distorted for political and economic pursuits and privileging. The future will be the "*Age of Spirit*", where experience, emotional expression and inner feelings matter. The deeper level of Spiritualities that people are searching for is not based on doctrinal articulations, intellectual theology or ecclesial authority. Rather there is a pull for open and relevant spiritualities by which people feel and experience deep connectivity of everything from material to spiritual. Therefore, future programme expressions of CWM will explore how these different spiritual yearnings and searching are facilitated within faith communities, thereby restoring authenticity of spiritualities and worship as a matter of authentic faith confessing.

#### 4.7. Life-Flourishing Evangelism

4.7.1. There is an urgent cry for evangelism and radical discipleship in an age of personal disillusionment, social complexities, groaning creation and lack of faith in established

churches. Returning to the basic understanding of Jesus' invitation for ordinary people to follow him, becoming like him "in wisdom, stature and in favour with both God and human beings" (Luke 2: 52); to bring the "good news" of shalom to those who lost their way to God; and to experience optimum fulfilment of mission accomplished, will be fundamental in this next period of CWM's life and prophetic engagement. The reclamation of this understanding of evangelism is the basis for exploration and engagement with/of member churches towards new approaches to holistic witness, where spiritual grounding, wholesome relationships and transformative praxis is the goal.

#### 4.8. Life-Flourishing Education

4.8.1. In the face of the critical situation of our times, the church's mission faces an urgent challenge of transforming future epistemology from the current dualistic and dichotomic one to one that is holistic, relational, organic and reciprocal. This will necessitate intentional equipping of leadership of churches for awareness and engagement in holistic connectivity from the earth to God. Therefore, education is a matter of faith confessing process to which CWM will commit itself.

#### 4.9. Life-Flourishing Church in Action

4.9.1. The Church that embodies the living presence of Jesus of Nazareth is a community of hope, healing and liberation. In contexts where ideologies of supremacy breed gender-based violence, create sexual minorities, engender hate and divide peoples into class, caste and racial categories, Jesus calls the church to become life-flourishing in its grassroots expression, embodying a culture of inclusiveness, justice and peace. CWM will, therefore, encourage a spiritual renewal movement within the Church, where worship serves as a life-giving instrument for radical discipleship, hope in action and prophetic witness to life-flourishing communities. In commending this 2020-2029 strategy framework to its member churches, CWM hopes that it will inform vision and mission, foster reflection and research, deepen awareness, and inspire commitment to evangelism and discipleship.

#### 4.10. Life-Flourishing Ecumenism

4.10.1. The change of CWM's image in the ecumenical landscape from being a donor agent for ecumenical projects to becoming an equal and active partner in the global mission and ecumenical agenda for "fullness of life in Christ for all creation", is now a core calling to the CWM identity. Therefore, CWM will embrace radical and transformative ecumenism and foster ecumenical and life-flourishing learning and engagement as central to its missional identity and praxis. This includes working and engaging with multiple faith traditions. Such ecumenical space will enable CWM to share its 2020-2029 Strategy Framework with key ecumenical partners for joint action; and to build a solidarity agenda for engagement with such bodies as the United Nations, International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to address such global issues and challenges as economic injustice,

climate change and militarisation and conflict, affecting the wellbeing of humanity and the environment.

4.10.2. The Strategy framework, the Theology statement and the Missio Confessionis are inviting the church to rise up in the face of Babylon's oppression, and in that moment of choice to be filled with the Spirit of Christ, whose love commissions, sends and equips us. The vision for CWM over the next 10 years necessitates we are part of building new communities of life, at the global, national and local level. The work Christ sets before us, and has begun, means seeking partnership with those already committed to these struggles. In this work, we seek common ground with people of multiple faiths and spiritualities, engaging churches and peoples' movements, believing we will meet Christ in them rising to life from beneath Babylon.

## 5. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

### 5.1. Alignment of structure with strategy

- 5.1.1. Governance seeks to align strategy with leadership, organisational structures and decision-making processes; and with management systems, staff and work. It grounds the values of CWM in its policies and practices, with due accountability and transparency. The structure being proposed takes into account the theological and philosophical underpinnings that express the discernment and decision-making processes as two pillars of CWM's understanding and practice of mission.
- 5.1.2. CWM is committed to the empowerment of God's people to proclaim the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, which transforms life-destroying situations into the life-flourishing household of God. In a world in which Babylon seems to have such a strong grip on life, we affirm the Good News that Babylon has fallen. We rise to life with the risen Lord Jesus, who defied the forces of death. The reshaping of the governance structure is, therefore guided by the commitment to Jesus' imagery of 'new wine in new wineskins' (Mt. 9:17).
- 5.1.3. A balance between the organisational structural identity of CWM and its missional impulse ought to be clearly visible. The fiduciary element is important as CWM needs to keep on target with all the regulatory tenets while remaining faithful to its missional objectives.
- 5.1.4. The Governance structure facilitates processes in which the whole body participates in discerning God's will and God's call as we seek to follow Jesus Christ. The discernment process includes spaces to share inputs and perspectives at regional and global levels through member church contributions, Members Mission Fora (MMF), Regional Assemblies (RAs), Annual Members' Meetings (AMMs), General Secretaries' Conference, the Assembly and ecumenical partners. The discernment process contributes to the formal decision-making process through the Assembly, Annual Members' Meeting and

the Board of Directors. The General Secretary, as head of the Secretariat and an ex-officio member of the Board, is the strategic bridge between management and governance.

5.1.5. The Secretariat provides leadership to enable visioning strategies and communication and ensures implementation, monitoring and evaluation and continuity of the work of CWM. This allows for interpretation and enactment of policies and decisions into programmes and action plans and the fostering of relationships.

5.1.6. The CWM tripod (see Figure 1) – Members, Board of Directors and Secretariat – works in sync because the tripod is involved in the discernment process, through interactive processes of input, reflection, decision-making and implementation at various levels.



FIGURE 1

5.1.7. The extent to which this model can work most effectively is dependent on a number of factors:

- 5.1.7.1. Leadership – Quality leadership, including the selection of management staff and directors. The strategic appointment of appropriately skilled and knowledgeable representatives by member churches to the CWM meetings will ensure quality participation at all levels.
- 5.1.7.2. CWM's commitment to ecumenical partnership, including peoples' and social movements, especially for justice-supporting, provides space for further collaboration at the decision-making level. Therefore, an ecumenical representative on the Board of Directors would affirm this commitment and strengthen its witness.

## 5.2. Working Pattern

5.2.1. **Board Meetings** – Governance must not be compromised. Therefore, to ensure the effective working of the tripod, consideration ought to be given to the frequency of Board Meetings, thereby:

- Honouring the relationship between discernment and decision-making processes,
- Providing adequate time for the effective implementation of decisions of the Board by management between board meetings,
- Creating an enabling environment for volunteers to serve on the Board within a realistic and balanced pattern of life commitments,
- Allowing for the Board’s existing Officers, i.e. Moderator, Treasurer and General Secretary, to work together to follow through on decisions of the Board.
- Further, initiating a mid-term evaluation for Board members would help them to develop their service during their period of membership.

5.2.2. **AMM** – To ensure continuity of leadership and effective decision-making, Churches are invited to consider:

- Continuing their AMM representatives through a four-year term, when they are serving well, rather than appointing a different person each year.
- Have the member representative to the AMM as one of the delegates to the MMF.

5.2.3. **Education and Orientation** - New Board members must be adequately oriented to the working of CWM and to their role.

## 6. LOCATION CONSIDERATIONS

### 6.1. Ideological Justification

6.1.1. The city of London has, since the founding of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1795, served as the administrative location for the global missionary work. LMS took the name of the location to emphasise the non-denominational character of the organization rather than to embrace it as a permanent place of abode. When the organization was transformed in 1977 to become the Council for World Mission (CWM), the central office remained in London; although it then stated that London should remain its home only “for the time being”. The new organization of CWM embraced the theme: “From everywhere to everywhere”, to communicate a strong message that the organization’s identity is to be found through its global presence. The sites of Livingston House and, later, Ipalo House, served the CWM family and its wider ecumenical partners well. However, it became apparent to the leadership that “the time being” had come, and a new location was necessary to demonstrate CWM’s commitment to move beyond its Euro-centric heritage and to concretise its new identity as a post-colonial pluriverse mission organisation.

6.1.2. The process of moving CWM’s secretariat location beyond London emerged in tandem with the 2010-2019 strategy framework; and in response to the earlier decision of 1977

for a location reflecting the ideological shift in missional identity and practice to be identified. A process of regionalization of CWM since 1989; and the ways in which this process contributed to greater cohesiveness, contributed to the decision to seek a new location. After the 2009 Assembly, when CWM sought to respond to challenges linked to immigration restrictions of delegates and staff to travel and work in the UK, the urgency of location was heightened. The choice of Singapore as the new location, in 2011, emerged through a process of consultation and discernment in which several locations across the geography of CWM were considered and assessed. In naming Singapore as the location, the CWM board again stated that Singapore should be the location “for now”, to emphasise the point made earlier that there should be no permanent home for a mission organisation with a pluriverse identity.

6.1.3. The seven years of CWM’s secretariat being located in Singapore have offered both positive and negative experiences; and there have been significant learning points for CWM. The context is one that provides immense security and convenience for staff and their families; it is well organised and efficient; and the amenities are of a very high standard, thereby strengthening the productivity of CWM and enabling us to function without undue stress. At the same time, Singapore is one of the most expensive cities in the world, which many perceive as contradictory to CWM’s advocacy for a new economic model. Additionally, the socio-political realities of Singapore pose great challenges to CWM’s non-negotiable prophetic role of being a voice for justice in the world. These, coupled with immigration and employment challenges, kept CWM ever mindful that the “for now” position of 2011 remained alive. In 2016 the Board of Directors reflected on the following commentary on Singapore as its location:

6.1.3.1. With years of investment in human capital aimed at maximising competitive advantages for economic growth, we have quickly learned that Singapore’s manpower was prudently groomed for commerce. Although this commercial outlook continues to work wonders for the city state’s economy, it renders an organisation like CWM a second or even third-tier choice for employment. This has led to challenges for recruitment and retention. CWM now has to look beyond the borders for staffing at all levels, not only management, as we did historically.

6.1.3.2. Being able to leverage the diversity of a global workforce should represent an opportunity to balance the mix of skills available across the organisation. However, immigration policies and practices, worldwide, are becoming more and more unfriendly for an organisation like CWM, which is keen to recruit staff internationally to function from a single administrative location. The experiences in Singapore, the most recent of which is the denial of Employment Pass for our newly recruited Communications Manager, have challenged us to consider creative ways of responding to this challenge without compromising the mission to which we are called or the commitment to be truly representative, in staff composition, of the

international community to which we belong (General Secretary's report to the Board, June 2016).

- 6.1.4. In response, and observing the particular bias towards, and seeming marginalisation of African countries, the Board resolved to consider a multiple-location strategy with a fully functional dispersed team to combat the unjust international immigration policies and practices; and to reiterate its commitment to embrace diversity and plurality.
- 6.1.5. In the establishment of regional offices, with the decision to retain administrative presence in Singapore and London, and to establish a similar presence in South Africa, the Board demonstrated its intention to diversify the CWM legal presence in different contexts, thereby minimising the socio-political and economic fallout from any one location and maximising CWM's capacity to function effectively. The ideological and theological significance of this affirms that "CWM will always be on the move" whenever and wherever the wind of the Spirit of God calls us.

## 6.2. Strategic Implications

- 6.2.1. Since the international immigration policies continue to pose negative impact (inherent injustice) upon peoples, especially of certain nations of the global South and of religious and ethnic backgrounds, CWM is strategically positioned to bring this to the attention of its international ecumenical partners for joint action, aimed at transformation.
- 6.2.2. In the important areas of Finance and economic power, it is observed that London remains the financial centre for CWM despite the ideological shift in 1977. Taking the Legacies of Slavery project and the focus on NIFEA into consideration, this framework offers opportunity for CWM to explore whether London should continue to remain the centre of financial control of the organisation's resources; and if not, to consider viable alternatives that reflect the values of the organisation.

# 7. THEOLOGICAL AND MISSIOLOGICAL COMMITMENTS TO LIFE-FLOURISHING ECONOMY AND FINANCE FOR ALL

## 7.1. Faith and the Management of Finance

- 7.1.1. CWM, as part of the ecumenical movement, has appraised, analyzed and criticized the financial and economic systems that deny the flourishing of life. It is now known that:
  - 7.1.1.1. Finance is largely detached from real economy. Virtual money has become a commodity instead of being a medium for the exchange of goods and services. Through speculation, a few become wealthy while the majority are impoverished.

Christian faith and ethics ask what role money now has in an economy of life for all people and all of creation.

- 7.1.1.2. Perpetual indebtedness continues to enslave the people and destroys their livelihoods. Yet biblical and Christian teaching on lending at interest is that money must not be a source of profit when payment for it is made at the expense of the poor.
  - 7.1.1.3. The motive of speculation is greed because this practice yields money without producing real wealth. This unethical fetishisation of money poisons the economy of life.
  - 7.1.1.4. No global financial regulatory system will stop speculation and prevent financial volatility.
- 7.1.2. CWM thus, is called to promote Life Flourishing Financial Systems by the following actions:
- Advocating for financial practices which address the flourishing of economy of life;
  - Joining ecumenical and other movements that advocate for global financial regulation.
  - Offering theological Education for economy of life (TEEL) which includes the addressing of the proposals from the NIFEA programme.
  - Practicing a type of financial management that promotes the economy of life.
  - Exploring alternative financial schemes that promote life flourishing communities.

## 7.2. Liberating Money for Mission

This section shows how theological principles can be expressed in practical policies around CWM's resources. Money is a resource for delivering CWM's objectives, not an end in itself.

### 7.2.1. The Investment Portfolio

CWM's spending is heavily reliant on its Investment Portfolio. During 2020-29 CWM should explore different but productive ways of holding this capital, especially in local economies, in products that promote CWM priorities (e.g. with regard to climate) and in social enterprises.

### 7.2.2. Making Capital Missional

Where CWM invests capital in conventional markets to secure a reliable flow of resources, it should continue to invest in the most life-affirming options available and challenge aspects of company behaviour and practice that diverge from Gospel principles. In particular, CWM should draw more on the expertise and experience of the Global South in identifying investment models that have potential to succeed, whilst also promoting local initiative and well-being.

### 7.2.3. Using the Resources

Making our capital work hard for CWM's priorities needs to be complemented by ensuring that the resources generated also work hard to serve those same priorities. In programme work, CWM should, therefore, allocate resource prudently, operate with clear and flexible guidelines, and be open to local diversity and unexpected opportunity.

We, therefore, aim for initiatives that:

- critique CWM's internal culture and behaviour;
- unmask our complicity, lead us to repent of our wrong, and commit us to new patterns of living based on justice and peace; and on financial practice, including reparations arising from the findings of the Legacies of Slavery project report;
- promote a more committed prophetic engagement with God's mission locally and globally;
- support or involve facilitation and strengthening capacity of member churches that match the vision of rising to life from falling Babylon;
- strengthen capacities in global, regional or national ecumenical organisations and global confessional bodies to embrace this same vision;
- accompany social movements in advocating for life-flourishing communities of all, irrespective of faith or belief.

## 8. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

### 8.1. Introduction

8.1.1. CWM needs an effective, integrated and coordinated communication strategy that can best respond to the objectives of its new strategic framework. Guided by CWM's vision and mission, this section of the Strategy Framework describes the philosophy, values and principles that will undergird the communication strategies.

### 8.2. Goal

8.2.1. Through messaging of the Good News, the dissemination of information and capacity development, to support, enable and inspire churches, ecumenical partners, and all others who are called to prophetic witness, to celebrate, proclaim and live out the vision of Jesus Christ of fullness of life for all creation (John 10:10).

### 8.3. Principles

8.3.1. **Communication that expresses faith and spirituality:** CWM finds in Jesus Christ, a model for communication. God in Christ became one with humankind and experienced a closeness with all creation. Jesus affirms the value of community and culture. He lived out the love of God for all people, lifting the weak and excluded and challenging those in power to serve the vulnerable. Jesus offers us communication as dialogue that is participatory and inclusive.

8.3.2. **Communication that is accessible:** Communication is the invisible bond that holds communities together. CWM will communicate in language that is clear, accessible and relevant to the context of its audiences and communication partners. CWM will be deliberate about finding varied/creative means to showcase the organisation's successes as well as the achievements of others.

8.3.3. **Communication that is inclusive:** *CWM's intention is to have participatory communication which is fundamentally inclusive. Participatory and inclusive communication empowers individuals and communities, challenges the forces of empire*

and helps to build a more just and peaceful world. CWM will ensure that the tone of communication is positive, and messages are authentic and inclusive. CWM is committed to developing strategies that demonstrate sensitivity to linguistic and demographic diversity.

- 8.3.4. **Communication that affirms partnership and mutuality:** Communication is multi-directional, responsive, and includes feedback. Genuine communication enables open, honest and transparent dialogue. CWM will employ participatory communication practices in which power dynamics are examined and interrogated to ensure that all voices are respected, and the feedback loop is completed.
- 8.3.5. **Communication that is intentional and regular:** *CWM's intention* is to provide a regular flow of information to build strong relationships with member churches and ecumenical partners;
- 8.3.6. **Communication that affirms justice and challenges injustice:** Communication that affirms justice and challenges injustice stimulates a critical awareness of empire and the realities that the media constructs. Communication can help people to identify special interests and to discern the lasting and valuable from the transitory and passing. *CWM's intention is* to have a communication strategy that affirms justice, challenges injustice, builds member capacity to critique the myths constructed by those that control the media. Communication enables and empowers people to learn from and interpret their own reality and to act as advocate for themselves.
- 8.3.7. **Communication that affirms freedom and authenticity:** The upcoming era of the Artificial Intelligence and Digitalisation is often characterized by surveillance capitalism, which may deprive and manipulate human freedom and confuse authenticity with the information and knowledge circulated through social network system (SNS). A new communication strategy needs to bear this in mind in developing future communication.
- 8.3.8. **Communication that is innovative and integrated:** The digital revolution has led to probably the most significant shift in world culture since the industrial revolution. Online communications, and social media, in particular, have rapidly changed the way people discover, consume and share information – putting content management, which was previously limited to the few in traditional media, in the hands of ordinary people, and particularly, the youth population, with an unprecedented ability to influence others. In implementing its communications strategy, CWM will leverage the highly targetable, interactive and versatile power of social media to engage global audiences in real time.

## 8.4. Communicating the Strategy

- 8.4.1. In particular, CWM will communicate this strategy document within and beyond its own fellowship. CWM will give due consideration to all input received and provide member churches and ecumenical partners with information on the outcome of the strategic process. Therefore, it will:
- 8.4.2. Share the 2020-2029 Strategy Framework with member churches and key Ecumenical Partners for joint action.

- 8.4.3. Provide information to support Member Churches' efforts to study and use the 2020-2029 CWM strategy framework to inform their vision of developing local congregations in mission.
- 8.4.4. Reproduce in accessible and user-friendly forms the theology statement, *Missio Confessionis* and revised governance structure, including the diagrammatic expression, in order to support member churches and stakeholders to engage and participate.

## 9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1. The world is facing an unprecedented crisis in nearly every facet of life. The new decade of the 2020s finds our planet at its highest risk of ecocide. Humanity's fixation with economic growth and profit at any cost has resulted in exploitation and impoverishment, and a climate catastrophe. Both humans and other forms of life are suffering because of the addiction to an insatiable appetite of the economic model of capitalism that is destroying life on earth.
- 9.2. Jesus once said, "If you were to keep silent, the very stones would cry out" (Luke 19:40). The stones are already crying out. The groaning of the whole creation has reached every part of the universe. Yet humans have failed to act with urgency. The Church has failed to grasp the seriousness of the situation and the implication for its identity and mission. The recent catastrophic fires in Australia, the Amazon forest, and California saw flames rising up to over 100 feet, destroying property, displacing communities and killing up to one billion animals and at least twenty five people. In the face of death, animals were running towards humans for safety, for salvation. The blue skies of Australia became red. Toxic smoke filled the atmosphere, rising to over 18,000 feet. These are pertinent signposts of creation in deep groaning, crying out for salvation. If CWM does not speak out and respond to God's calling to radical discipleship, then we will be found wanting and guilty of betraying the ministry and mission of Jesus.
- 9.3. The Strategy Framework is intended to help CWM to respond to the challenges and threats as outlined. While we mourn the pervasiveness of death in the world, we place confidence in the insurrection of the resurrection of Jesus who defeated the powers of death over life. We need alternative life flourishing communities that demonstrate this victory of life over death. The theology statement is clarion call to rise to life, to break out from Babylon's grip of death and destruction. And the *Missio Confessionis* compels us to express our faith in God as a missional confession. We are compelled to take this faith stand because our call to radical discipleship and the mission of the church are at risk of being irrelevant to the cries of this world.
- 9.4. The CWM family faces an urgent compulsion to rise up and resist. Inaction, neutrality and apathy are not options of faith. All followers of Jesus are invited to confront the sin of our

evil systems that produce alienation and broken relationships with all of creation. This strategic framework seeks to disturb and disrupt the “business as usual” approach within the faith community that has given in to apathy and tiredness, and that allows evil to reign and flourish in the world. It invites CWM, its member churches and all people of goodwill to demonstrate their commitment to radical discipleship through the offering of ourselves to serving others.

*Creation is hurting  
People are dying  
The powerful are profiting  
God is crying, God is calling!*

- 9.5. At a time when the Church’s message of salvation is encountering resistance from many who have lost confidence in the gospel, the call to grow deeper in Christ and bolder in service necessitates that the faith community, like Jesus, surrender to the will of God even when evil is rampant, death seems victorious, Empire appears invincible and our soul is deeply grieved to the point of death. Like Jesus, the church too should embrace the ‘divine nevertheless’ and say: “Not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:39 NIV). Jesus reminds the church and all of his followers that his gift of peace is an antidote to the tribulation they will encounter in sharing in his mission - “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33 ESV).
- 9.6. Therefore, we pray to the God of Jesus Christ as an act of surrender to the One who is the only hope for the world in this time of conflict, crisis and disaster. We pray not out of fear or escapism from the real problems of this contemporary world; but with faith and confidence that God has the last word on everything and everyone. We are not afraid! So, we pray:

*“O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted  
Grant us courage and hope  
Where anxiety is infectious and widening,  
Grant peace and reassurance.  
Where impossibilities close every door and window,  
Grant imagination and resistance.  
Where distrust twists our thinking,  
Grant healing and illumination.  
Where our spirits are daunted and weakened,  
Grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams.  
All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.*

**Amen.**

*(ELCA Lutheran worship).*

## LIST OF APPENDICES

- i. SPG Work Process Report including reports of the Data Analysis and Governance Working Groups.

## LIST OF ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS

- i. CWM Theology Statement 2020
- ii. CWM Missio Confessionis
- iii. Theological and Missiological Commitments to Life-Flourishing Economy and Finance for All
- iv. Legacies of Slavery Core Group Report