

# **Reformed groups step toward merger: Merger will create World Reformed Communion**

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Leaders of two worldwide Reformed organizations, following a short meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, have announced their unanimous recommendation for merger of the 75-million-member World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the 12-million-member Reformed Ecumenical Council.

The new umbrella body, if ratified by the two groups' governing bodies, would be called the World Reformed Communion. Among its recommended goals: "to foster Reformed identity and spiritual life" and "to promote justice in the economy . . . [and] work for reconciliation in the world."

Clifton Kirkpatrick, president of WARC and the top executive of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), called the agreement, announced February 1, "a very significant ecumenical breakthrough" for the talks that began in 1998. "We dealt with both doctrinal issues and motivation, but all agreed that the distinctives of both bodies were gifts that would enrich the whole and reflect a holistic understanding of the gospel," Kirkpatrick said.

Added Setri Nyomi, general secretary of WARC: "There was a perception that REC was more conservative and WARC more liberal. But this perception has blurred more recently." The merger "will create a more efficient organization that will better serve the Reformed family," said Nyomi, who is based in Geneva.

WARC has 218 affiliated church bodies in 107 countries, while the Reformed Ecumenical Council has 40 church entities in 25 countries. A total of 27 churches were already dually aligned.