

Reformed, Disciples groups seeking closer ties: Two global bodies

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Two global church bodies of Protestants—the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council—say they are looking to establish a closer relationship.

“It is significant that several united churches around the world are already members of both bodies and have been a voice encouraging us to pursue closer relationships in the future,” said Robert Welsh, the general secretary of DECC.

The Geneva-based WARC said in a statement August 11 that leaders of the two groups had agreed at a meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, at the end of July to continue talking about “the development of a comprehensive partnership in pursuit of the visible unity of the Church.”

WARC general secretary Setri Nyomi said the Nashville meeting marked a “potentially significant” step in the pursuit of Christian unity. “We welcome this important move.”

WARC has roots in the 16th-century Reformation led by John Calvin, John Knox and others, as well as in earlier church reform movements in Europe such as those of the Waldensians and the followers of Jan Hus. It brings together 75 million Christians in 214 churches.

The Disciples of Christ (known in some parts of the world as Churches of Christ) grew out of an early-19th-century movement with origins in both the United Kingdom and the United States. Established in 1979, the DECC is a council of 19 Disciples of Christ, Churches of Christ, United and Uniting churches and represents 4.5 million Christians around the world.

In a separate ecumenical decision last October, WARC agreed to merge with the Reformed Ecumenical Council, with which it has overlapping memberships, to form the World Communion of Reformed Churches in 2010.

The DECC member churches are to consider a proposal that DECC become an associate member of WCRC to allow closer ties in relation to the programs and governance of the new communion of churches. -*Ecumenical News International*