

Reformed communion urged to leave Geneva: Christianity "has moved dramatically to the Global South"

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A global Protestant body should move its headquarters out of Geneva to cut costs and to follow the global shift of Christianity to the Southern Hemisphere, says a U.S. Reformed church leader.

Addressing the founding meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on June 24, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, described Geneva as one of the most expensive cities in the world.

It is not a new question raised in ecumenical circles, especially at the Geneva-based World Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation, although politically neutral Switzerland also hosts a number of international and UN-related organizations that church bodies deal with. But the American church leader questioned how the Reformed grouping could talk of promoting global justice when it has its headquarters in a place of "significant economic privilege."

Granberg-Michaelson said that a shift away from Geneva also would be a matter of solidarity with its member churches, at a time when Christianity "has moved dramatically to the Global South."

The new Reformed body was formed as a merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council. Reformed Christians trace their heritage in part to John Calvin, who is known for his role in the 16th-century Protestant Reformation in Geneva.

The new president of the WCRC, Jerry Pillay of South Africa, told journalists after his June 24 election that "the issue needs to be looked at," given the need to be cost effective.

Granberg-Michaelson was a member of a working group that proposed Johannesburg in South Africa, Accra in Ghana, or Hong Kong as alternatives to Geneva for the WCRC headquarters.

“If South Africa can host the World Cup, I’m sure that they can host the offices of the WCRC,” he said. -*Steven Brown, Ecumenical News International*