

WACC UK BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING - Online

February 26, 2026 - 10:00 A.M. TORONTO TIME

Attendees:

Embert Charles – President (President)
Juha Rajamäki – Treasurer (Treasurer)
Mathilde Kpalla – Vice-President (Mathilde)
Rania Rashad William – Vice-President (Rania)
Vincent Rajkumar – Director (Vincent)
Corinne Barnes – Director (Corinne)
Alba Sabate Gauxachs – Director (Alba)
Gregg Brekke – Director (Gregg)
Jim McDonnell – Director (Jim)
Philip Lee – Director (ex officio) and WACC General Secretary (GS)
Absent with apologies: David Morales Alba – Director
Netani Rika – Director

Staff:

Philip Lee – Director and WACC General Secretary (GS)
Sara Speicher – Deputy General Secretary (DGS)
Joseph Patterson – Finance Director (FD)
Shari McMaster – Administrative Coordinator and Board Liaison (Shari)

List of Approved Motions and Actions

1. MOVED: To receive the Fundings Action and Funding Applications documents.
2. MOVED: To approve the Management Actions document.
3. MOVED: To approve the Membership Report.
4. MOVED: To approve the Budget.
5. Any other Business: That the approval of the 2025 Budget be affirmed.

The Meeting continued from yesterday. The President was present and Chaired the meeting. Quorum was established. Corinne Barnes in attendance today.

11. Funding Actions

The Funding Actions documents form part of this meeting and are available for review.

The DGS was invited to present the Fundings Actions documents.

The document sets out various conversations that staff has had as of 2025 with funders, potential funders, and partners. Many of these conversations have been ongoing for some time and are continuing. The document includes the results of the various conversations and the follow-up.

It also notes other fundraising efforts. The DGS noted that she and the GS work with different databases that list grant application possibilities and donor leads which do not show up on this list.

One of the most interesting outreach possibilities was to apply to the French Foreign Ministry, partnering with WCC for a 4 MIL Euro grant. This is the largest grant that either WACC or WCC had ever applied for. While unsuccessful, WACC strengthened its relationship with WCC and there could be other opportunities to work closely with them in the future.

The Funding Applications document sets out funding opportunities that WACC has applied for. Applications include the years 2024, 2025 and 2026. The results are mixed in terms of success.

On the second page of the document, WACC has been good at getting co-funding for the CAP projects, which puts WACC in a strong position to acquire additional funding.

The DGS noted that part of the funding dilemma is that project overhead funding usually only allows 8-10%. WACC is always therefore managing how many projects staff can handle, vs. whether WACC can get enough money to support the staff. Therefore, WACC continues to attempt to get unrestricted core funding and ways in which WACC can generate funding.

The President asked for comments or questions.

It was asked if the success rate is higher when organizations put out a call or for proposals that are initiated by WACC.

The DGS said that most success is when WACC sees an opportunity to develop a relationship with a funder and then match a project to what they are interested in. This is reflected in the CAP co-funding, projects with ELCA, WCC, EMW. WACC is therefore trying to develop more ongoing relationships with organizations like HIVOS in the Netherlands for core funding.

As a result of the financial issues among the charity / non-profit sector, the interest in combining expertise among our networks to submit strong applications is important.

The GS also noted that several of the applications stipulate that the application will be stronger if there are two or three partners working in different areas of the same project.

The President thanked the DGS for the presentation and **THE DOCUMENTS WERE RECEIVED.**

12. Management Actions Document

The Management Actions Document forms part of this meeting and is available for review.

The GS was invited to present this document. He reviewed the document which highlighted the following:

- A: Communication and visibility, including WACC brand (12-18 months development before launch).
- B: Strengthen membership and networking (3 years).
- C: Business development for existing or potential services or products (18 months).
- D: Strengthen existing funding and pursuing new funding (ongoing).
- E: Assessing WACC's organizational structure.
- F: Development of next Strategic Plan 2027-2030 (to begin mid 2026).

Change of Name issue.

WACC has employed two leading development communication consultants who have worked extensively with NGOs and in the church-related context. They were already aware of what WACC is trying to do. They reviewed the consultations that WACC had previously done with the Regions and others connected with WACC. They looked at the communication rights environment to see how WACC was trying to position itself.

The document entitled “To retain or rename: A report on changing the name of the World Association for Christian Communication” forms part of this meeting and is available for review.

The GS focussed on the Executive Summary of the Report.

The consultants identified what they perceived to be the key issues with the WACC name and brand. They reviewed the history of the organization. They realized what WACC had already said, that stakeholders struggle to understand what kind of organization WACC is. They focussed on 4 specific areas requiring change:

Misleading terminology – the word “Christian” can lead secular or interfaith partners to mistake WACC for a proselytizing entity.

Ambiguity – The term “Communication” without qualification can encompass many things, while “World Association” feels outdated and unwieldy and no longer reflects WACC’s reach or operating model. “Christian Communication” together creates confusion and, in some contexts, has proven to be a barrier to engagement and funding.

Searchability – the acronym WACC is dominated by the financial term “Weighted Average Cost of Capital”, making the organization difficult to find online.

Brand dilution – WACC’s identity has been fragmented across three separate websites (WACC Global, Centre for Communication Rights, and WhoMakestheNews-GMMP), creating confusion about its core purpose.

Page 2 of the Executive Summary makes the following recommendations:

1. Adopt a new name – Centre for Communication Justice.
2. Invest in a full rebrand
3. Consolidate the digital presence – merge three separate identities under a new name.
4. Implementation and transition – careful internal and external communication about the change.

The GS said that the staff is continually discussing the issue, but it is important to have input from the Directors and a decision on the way forward.

Corinne – Agrees with the consultants. It is clear there is a need for change. Is concerned about the costs of a full rebranding.

GS – The cost of the rebranding is reflected in the budget to be discussed at this meeting.

Mathilde – Are there proposed timeline dates?

GS – It depends on the length of time it takes to carry out various steps. Hopefully it could be done before the end of 2026. The next proposed step is a meeting of the Directors along with the consultants, and the RECs, so that they can advise and answer questions. In parallel, staff would speak with the donors and institutional members to see their views on the proposals.

Finally, a change of name is likely a decision that would have to be taken by the members, who would need to be advised of the process. Then an online vote for or against. The GS is hopeful this can all be done by the end of 2026.

Juha – Noted that funds have been earmarked for this but is concerned about the staff time that is required.

GS – This has not yet been detailed but looking at various staff roles. Once a firm decision on which direction is being taken, it will be easier to determine that.

Jim – It is relevant to look at how various organizations have rebranded and the successes or failures. Need to be very clear before we go too fast and have a good handle on what we are trying to achieve, the timetable that will have to be met and how to ensure we can self-correct in the process. Important to understand from the consults how to proceed. JM – commends the team for these initiatives and believes it is a good way to get WACC back on track for the future.

Corinne – Understands that it is agreed that WACC is going for a change of name and a rebrand. So the questions are:

- do we go with the name Centre for Communication Justice?
- what are the implications among the funders – will we lose funders, especially the major funder – this is an important consideration

Gregg –He works with many ecumenical organizations who have removed the religious aspect from their names. There is a movement among faith-based non-profits to better reflect what their missions do in the world. He is absolutely behind the rebranding. Especially consolidating the entities. Believes that it is important to speak with the major donors for them to understand that WACC is continuing to achieve its objectives.

Alba – Has read the report carefully. Understands the importance of this situation and how the word “Christian” is part of the problem of identity. She feels however that the word “Centre” means that we are losing the “association” identity. Perhaps a word like “Hub” or Network” better identifies WACC as a global entity. Regarding the rebranding, she believes, maintaining something from the previous identity is important. Agrees that this is the time for making a decision.

Rania – Is in agreement with the rebranding and a change of name. Especially in the Middle East, it is much better to change “Christian Communication”. We need to think about the name. Agrees with Alba that the name “Centre” does not convey what WACC is doing and the size of WACC. Perhaps keep the word “ ”. Need to weigh all the possibilities on the choosing of the name. Important to lobby with partners and donors to make them accept the change before we make it.

Vincent – He pointed out that the word “Christian” relates to Christian values, rather than Christianity. In Asia they have had very lively discussions surrounding the issue of the name change. “WACC” is so well recognized and has been for many years. He believes that the name should be reinterpreted in the modern times. Something that will appeal to Christians and non-Christians alike.

The President believes that it is very important to monitor the situation carefully. However, he strongly recommends that a decision be made before the new Board in 2027. He would hate to burden a new Board with that decision. He also noted that it is very important to decide on the process on how this decision is made.

He hears very clearly that the Board accepts the output of the consultants and their justification for a change but also hears concerns about the specific recommendation about the Centre for Communication Justice. Can the Board propose recommendations that reflect the same arguments that the consultants are putting forward. He understands there is some anxiety regarding the word “Centre”.

GS – Thinks that we can go back to the Consultants with the concerns raised and get their opinion. Then come back to the Board with their comments.

He also appreciates that a decision be made prior to the new Board and that it is a decision that is generally acceptable to everyone.

Corinne asked if the name would be part of the conversation with the donors and partners. The GS said that it would be part of the conversation.

The name “Centre” remains a concern.

The President indicated that the Report of the Consultants contains comments and it is the task of the team now to summarize and work with the Consultants to see if they are able to respond to some of the Board concerns. Hopefully in a short time we can get some response and make some decisions at a future Board meeting.

There was a brief discussion of the time frame and when a next special Board meeting could take place, just for this matter. The GS suggests that this could be arranged before the end of April.

Office in Toronto

The GS spoke to the matter of the physical office in Toronto. By September 2026 there will have to be a decision made about retaining the office. The landlord is in flux about whether they are moving, or not, or selling the property. The reality is that WACC probably does not need a physical space. It is hoped that a firm recommendation will be made to the Board by mid-year.

IT was MOVED by Corinne Barnes and SECONDED by Mathilde Kpalla that the Management Actions document be approved. CARRIED.

13. Membership Report

The Membership Report forms part of this meeting and is available for review.

The DGS presented the Membership Report. There are two specific recommendations that the Board is being asked to consider.

Despite great efforts to improve membership, WACC still struggles to grow membership. Initiatives taken to increase membership are listed in the Report. Of note is the free membership to university students and staff, and there is an increase in student memberships. WACC has created tangible value to offer as a benefit, for example the Just Digital course. Free membership is also being offered to targeted people in the hope that they will see the value in membership.

The membership lists have recently been sent to the Regions so that they can put a personal touch on the invitation to join and rejoin.

The secretariat has held two online meetings enabling regional associations to share best practices with one another, which has been very well received. Some of the Regions have shared wonderful endeavours that the region is doing, but unfortunately, this still has not translated into many new members. WACC will continue to facilitate the regional sharing meetings.

WACC makes the following proposals:

1. To offer project partners a free institutional membership (without voting rights) – covering the year(s) of their project.
2. Continue the option of offering a free, one year “trial” membership to institutions and individuals, dependent on approval in each case by the General Secretary. Such members would not have voting rights.

The President requested comments or questions.

It was noted that we should try to determine how to meet the expectations of people. It is understood that people in different regions have different expectations. In some regions, people considering membership expect that WACC will be funders. In other regions, there is the expectation of being connected to other communicators.

It was thought that the offer of free membership is an excellent idea to introduce people to WACC.

Rania noted that the Middle East especially is a region where the situation is such that it is not a priority to be a member of WACC. The political situation throughout the Region and severe economic conditions attribute to this. What may be helpful would be to develop an online brochure, describing what WACC is all about, how can one benefit from being a member. It could be shared among university students and universities, development organizations, with different fee structures. Rania said that it is easier to send an attachment in an email, rather than directing someone to the website.

The DGS said that we can work on a new membership pitch that could include these ideas.

IT was MOVED by Juha Rajamäki and SECONDED by Vincent Rajkumar that the Membership Report and the recommendations noted therein be approved. CARRIED.

14. Budget

The Budget forms part of this meeting and is available for review.

The Finance Director was invited to present the Budget, which was shared on the screen.

This budget contains the Actuals for 2024 and 2025, as well as the Budgets for 2025 and 2026, 2027, 2028 and 2029.

The FD projected a deficit in 2026 in the amount of \$367,575 before drawing on reserves. This is more than 2025 but \$50,000 of this deficit is attributable to the name change and rebranding. In 2027 the deficit is projected to be \$419,167 which includes a face-to-face meeting of the Board in the approximate amount of \$123,039.

WACC is projecting that as a result of rebranding efforts, in 2028 and 2029 the deficits will be \$283,048 and \$214,488 respectively, which is closer to the cap of \$200,000 that has been set.

Key to this budget, is the significant windfall in 2025 where the amount in the reserves increased to 3.5 million from 3.4 at the beginning of 2025. This is therefore the most opportune time to invest in the rebranding initiative. WACC has also been very careful in the last four years in how the reserve funds have been used.

The FD is very optimistic for success in the next few years. He suggests that we have the opportunity now to make the investment in WACC and looks forward to WACC having a level of sustainability going forward.

The President asked for comments or questions.

The Treasurer noted there are challenges involved in attaining self-generated income but also noted that the rebranding initiatives provides a feeling of great optimism.

IT was MOVED by Greg Brekke and SECONDED by Vincent Rajkumar that the Budget be approved. CARRIED.

15. Any other Business

The GS noted that there is one additional item.

On June 18, 2024, following the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the WACC UK Board approved the Budget for the years 2024-2026, which included the year 2025. Since there were no changes to the Budget in the course of 2025, the Budget was never brought back to the Board for further review. However, the Canadian auditor may want documented approval of the year 2025 in preparing the current audits. The GS asks that the Board affirms that the 2025 Budget was approved in the package of the 2024-2026 Budget as presented.

The President asked for a Motion to affirm the 2025 Budget.

IT was MOVED by Mathilde Kpalla and SECONDED by Juha Rajamäki that the approval of the 2025 Budget be affirmed. CARRIED.

The President noted that these are very important decisions that have been made and thanked everyone for attending. He hopes that the Board can assemble again very soon to discuss the change of name matter.