

United Church of Canada Partner Council 2023–2025

Updated January 2023

The Partner Council of The United Church of Canada was established in 2011 as part of the United Church's commitment to live into its partnership principle of mutuality and accountability, "Reviewing Partnership in the Context of Empire (2009)" (commons.united-church.ca > Global Partnership). It enables partner voices and input to be heard at all levels of the church, including governance structures, and affirms the importance of global partner accompaniment of the church as we continue to live out God's mission in Canada and globally.

The Partner Council reports to the General Council Executive of The United Church of Canada.

The Partner Council is intended to:

- Connect to various ministries, regions, and structures of the United Church bringing global perspective, wisdom, and experience.
- Deepen understanding of United Church context informed by global perspectives.
- Reflect back to the United Church their perspectives of United Church ministry in Canada and globally.
- Offer advice on how to effectively engage in partner consultation.
- Offer advice on General Council programs that may benefit from a global perspective.
- Be a lens for checking United Church policies and practices to ensure consistency with partnership principles.
- Bring to the United Church's attention critical global or regional issues that might have an impact on our common mission/ministry work.
- Serve as a mechanism for feedback regarding specific United Church policy decisions that might have an impact on global partners.

The following are the council members for 2023–2025:

- **Aisha Francis**, Executive Director - KAIROS-Canada
- **Samer Laham**, Director of Emergency Response Services - Middle East Council of Churches
- **Marcelo Leites**, General Secretary - World Christian Student Fellowship
- **Kangwa Mabuluki**, General Secretary - All Africa Theological Education by Extension Association
- **Horacio Mesones**, Centro Regional Ecu mico de Asesor a y Servicio (Argentina)
- **Annie Namala**, Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation (India)

Partner representatives

Canada: KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

Aisha Francis (Toronto, Canada)

KAIROS Canada is a coalition of Canadian churches, church-based agencies, and religious organizations dedicated to promoting human rights, justice, and peace, viable human development, and universal solidarity among the peoples of the Earth. It is a decisive and faithful response to God's call for respect of the Earth and justice for its peoples.

Aisha Francis is the Executive Director and brings to her leadership a background in advocating for racial justice issues, and experience in justice, racial equity, and access for families impacted by incarceration.

Middle East: Middle East Council of Churches (MECC)

Samer Laham

The Middle East Council of Churches is a fellowship of 27 churches in 12 countries in the Middle East. The MECC strives to be a true and credible witness to justice and peace in the Middle East, building fellowship between member churches and building relationships of understanding and respect between Christians and peoples of other faith. A key MECC focus is response to humanitarian crisis in the region.

Samer Laham is the Director of Emergency Response Services for the MECC.

Africa: All Africa Theological Education by Extension Association (AATEEA)

Kangwa Mabuluki (Zambia)

Based in Lusaka, Zambia, AATEEA is an association of institutions offering distance theological learning for 25 countries in Africa. AATEEA acts as a coordinator for programs and encourages member engagement in critical social issues, offering seminars and training related to key social justice issues such as ecology and HIV/AIDS, and Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+ rights. AATEEA focuses on training grassroots leaders.

Kangwa Mabuluki is the Director of AATEEA. He has been involved in ministry and the ecumenical movement for more than 30 years.

Latin American and the Caribbean: Centro Regional Ecumenico de Asesoría y Servicio (CREAS)

Horacio Mesones (Argentina)

Founded in 2000 and based in Argentina, CREAS, the Regional Ecumenical Advisory and Service Centre, is a regional network of professionals that offers training and consulting relating to planning, communications, financial reporting, governance, and structures to nongovernmental organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Horacio Mesones is Executive Director of CREAS and has served on its staff since 2005.

Global Ecumenical: World Student Christian Federation

Marcelo Leites

The World Student Christian Federation is the oldest international student organization, founded in 1895. As a federation of student movements, the WSCF empowers and connects responsible young leaders around the world in their path to changing tomorrow. WSCF describes its mission as “empowering” students in critical thinking and constructive transformation of our world by being a space for prayer and celebration, theological reflection, study and analysis of social and cultural processes, and solidarity and action across boundaries of culture, gender, and ethnicity.

Marcelo Leites became the Federation’s Secretary General in 2021, serving previously as Regional Executive for Latin America and the Caribbean and Director for WSCF’s Global Program on Ecological Justice.

Asia: Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation

Annie Namala

The Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation (HRF) is a civil society institution in Chennai, India, that has worked for the promotion and protection of human rights since 1993. HRF enables socially excluded communities and vulnerable sections of society to exercise their constitutional rights, amplifies their voice, and enhances their participation in decision-making through demystifying laws, policies, budgets, and state mechanisms. It focuses on capacity building of communities, and support to deepen democracy to build inclusive, sustainable, and resilient communities

Annie Namala is Board Chairperson of the HRF as well as Convener of one of the largest civil society platforms in India called Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (*Do not break your promises*). Initiated in 2004, WNTA campaigns on governance accountability to end poverty and social exclusion.