# United Church of Canada Partner Council 2022–2025

Updated February 2025

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](https://unitedchurch.sharepoint.com/%3Ab%3A/s/UnitedChurchCommons/Ec0YxQog1XhMm3AR3kqrNCsBNRTbPoxd8a3p3Wk8XIomaw?e=UjXK7H) [Partnership in the Context of Empire (2009)](https://unitedchurch.sharepoint.com/%3Ab%3A/s/UnitedChurchCommons/Ec0YxQog1XhMm3AR3kqrNCsBNRTbPoxd8a3p3Wk8XIomaw?e=UjXK7H)“. 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 Executive of the General Council 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 2024–2025

* **Silvia Vasquez Olguin,** Global Program Coordinator for Latin America, Gender Justice and Extractivism - 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 Ecuménico de Asesoría y Servicio (Argentina)
* **Annie Namala, Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation (India)**

## Partner representatives

Canada: KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives Silvia Vasquez-Olguin (Canada)

KAIROS Canada is a coalition of 11 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.

**Silvia Vasquez-Olguin** is the Global Coordinator for Latin America, Gender Justice and Extractivism at KAIROS Canada.

Middle East: Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) Samer Laham (Lebanon)

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 (AETEA) Kangwa Mabuluki (Zambia)

Based in Lusaka, Zambia, AETEA is an association of institutions offering distance theological learning for

25 countries in Africa. AETEA acts as a coordinator for programs, encourages member engagement in critical social issues offering seminars and training related to key social justice issues such as ecology and HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ2S rights. AETEA focuses on for training grassroot leaders.

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

Latin American and the Caribbean: Centro Regional Ecumenico de Asesoria 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 (Argentina)

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 focusses 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.