

LWF CONSULTATION MESSAGE

The Lutheran World Federation European Church Leadership Consultation, 11-16 September 2008, Greifswald, Germany

We as church leaders of Lutheran churches from across Europe, meeting in Greifswald Germany, have been fed and nurtured by God's word and sacrament. In discussing several aspects of mission in the respective contexts of our churches, we have arrived at a common message on the following issues:

Being Church in European Society

From our visits to the Evangelical Church of Pomerania congregations, and from listening to the main presentations at the conference, we became aware of the challenges of shaping a church in society within a non-religious context that is determined by various factors such as secularism, totalitarian systems and migration.

We affirm as an encouraging sign the expression of religious interest and people's spirituality.

Migration

We have identified the special foci of European churches as increasing mobility, internal European migration and intercontinental migration. It is not only a national church challenge, but also one that should be seen in a broader European context. We recommend further explorations on the subject by both national churches and the LWF in order to find ways in which churches on the continent can cooperate on this important issue.

Human Sexuality

In discussing human sexuality, we listened to each other's views on the issue. Although we have different opinions and come from different backgrounds, we are very aware of our willingness together to maintain unity within the LWF. To continue the discussion on "Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality," we request the LWF Council to:

- assess the status of the process of dialogue;
- facilitate the dialogue to continue; and
- report on this progress to the Assembly in July 2010.

Leadership

Key characteristics of leadership in the church are transparency and trustworthiness. Our leadership has to be Christ-centred, not self-centred. In the Lutheran understanding, that means proclaiming the gospel and being good shepherds. Good leadership includes the ability and willingness to renew. It requires time for discussion about identity, a common vision and communication. Leadership can be carried out by a combination of paid staff and volunteers—a gathering of expertise—and not only in the minority churches. Both need certain training so that authority will be exercised as power **for**, not as power **over**.

LWF Renewal

The question of LWF as a *communio* needs more exploration of its ecclesiastical consequences. Mutual recognition of and respect for each member church's ministries and working practices are among the ingredients of such a *communio*.

European Cooperation

The LWF renewal process might possibly reduce participation of European churches, especially the smaller ones, in the LWF as a whole. Thus there is a strong need to work together. Cooperation will enhance and maintain information exchange and the involvement of every European member church. While methods have to be developed in the future, a good start would be proposals for possible themes and aims. Examples could include revision of liturgy, spiritual/theological exchange and solidarity.

The conference gave us impulses for a new understanding of the missionary task of the Church and the necessity to develop new ways in God's mission to meet people right where they are. As one of the keynote speakers said: "Beware of self-imposed depression and hopelessness. We could overlook what surprises God already has in store in this situation."

May the theme of the Greifswald consultation, "Called to Grow, Lead and Nurture," our experiences and conclusions, guide us to "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread," the theme of the 2010 LWF Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany.

Greifswald, Germany, 15 September 2008