



THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES – EINE KIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT – UNA COMUNIÓN DE IGLESIAS – UNE COMMUNION D'ÉGLISES
LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

Office of the General Secretary

Statement

by LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko
on the Church of England Action to Move toward Women Bishops

21 July 2008

On behalf of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), I welcome the decision of the Synod of the Church of England with respect to the ministry of episcopal leadership for women and men.

We welcome this decision first for its immediate consequences in ecumenical relations. Together with other Anglican churches in Britain and Ireland, the Church of England is joined to a number of LWF member churches from the Nordic and Baltic countries in the Porvoo Communion. Until now, there have been limits to the implementation of the Porvoo Common Statement because the Church of England did not accept the ministry of women bishops from the Lutheran churches. The Porvoo Communion is an inspiration for relations between Lutherans and Anglicans in many places around the globe, and we are very pleased that this obstacle to the fullness of its life in communion can now be removed.

Even more important, we are pleased that the Church of England has opened this way to the fuller recognition and celebration of the gifts of women called to ministry. The LWF member churches have been on this road for only a few years: the first women bishops in the Lutheran communion were elected only in 1992. But already it is clear that the leadership of women in all the roles of ordained ministry has been a blessing to those churches which have experienced it. We trust that the women who will become bishops in the Church of England similarly will bring gifts of leadership for the enrichment of the entire Anglican Communion.

At the 60th anniversary of the LWF celebrated in Lund, Sweden in 2007, the LWF Council adopted a statement on “Episcopal Ministry within the Apostolicity of the Church,” which reiterated our commitment to the ordination of women and, with that, to their service in episcopal ministry. Referring to the action of our Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil, in 1990, we affirmed again, “We thank God for the great and enriching gift to the church discovered by many of our member churches in the ordination of women to the pastoral office, and we pray that all members of the LWF, as well as others throughout the ecumenical family, will come to recognize and embrace God’s gift of women in the ordained ministry and in other leadership responsibilities in Christ’s church.”

At the same time, we have in our communion, as the Anglican Communion does also, those who on grounds of faith are not convinced that God calls women as well as men to be bishops. Discerning the ways of faithfulness is a road we must walk together. On this issue, as on others which remain controversial in our communions, no one has yet articulated the insights which can be convincing to all other positions. We accompany prayerfully the Church of England as she seeks pastoral means to embrace those who remain of an opinion different than the synod’s decision. As we pray for the unity of Christ’s church, we in the LWF assure our sisters and brothers in the Church of England that we will uphold them also in our prayers. We pray for the winds of the Holy Spirit, that they may “fall afresh on you,” leading you in paths of righteousness and love—Christ’s paths that we seek to follow with you.

*P.O. Box 2100, Route de Ferney 150,
CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
Tel +41/22-791 61 11, direct +41/22-791 63 63
Fax +41/22-791 66 30*



www.lutheranworld.org