

**Meeting between the Officers of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the
Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation,
Chavannes-de-Bogis, Switzerland, 18 November 2006**

COMMUNIQUÉ

The Officers of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), holding their meetings in the course of overlapping days, met for the first time in joint sessions and common worship on Saturday 18 November 2006 at Chavannes-de-Bogis, near Geneva, Switzerland.

The Reformed and the Lutheran traditions have important shared history. As families of churches shaped by the Reformation, they understand their traditions as historically and spiritually rooted in the early church, founded by Christ and the apostles. They have a deep, shared commitment to the unity of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, based on the living gospel of God's free gift of salvation, by grace and by faith alone, through which believers are called to bear fruit in life and service, for the healing of the human family.

In their shared commitment to the ecumenical movement WARC and LWF have chosen somewhat different paths as organizations. This difference has, however, never divided WARC and LWF, since they are both actively committed to the World Council of Churches (WCC) and its service to the integrity of the global ecumenical movement.

The secretariats of LWF and WARC, both lodged in the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, maintain close relations both in terms of continuous communication and by programmatic cooperation in different, specific areas. The two general secretaries regularly lead joint staff meetings, where issues of cooperation and common challenges are discussed.

As was clearly affirmed during the meeting at Chavannes-de-Bogis, the two communions share strong commitments to mission and to the struggle against social injustice and ecological destruction and cooperate specifically in these areas. Faith in justification by God's grace also commits the church to serve the causes of justice and healing at all times, and particularly in the face of the urgent challenges facing the human family today.

Following up the achievement of the Leuenberg Agreement in 1973 between Protestant churches in Europe, an international Lutheran-Reformed dialogue, which was concluded in 1987, recommended more broadly the establishment of church fellowship between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches. Since then, communion agreements have been formally established between Lutheran and Reformed churches in different parts of the world, such as through the Formula of Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and three Reformed churches in the United States, as well the Amman Declaration between seven Lutheran and Reformed churches in the Middle East, signed this year.

In some cases the agreements also involve united churches. Through tripartite regional agreements such as the Common Statements of Meissen and Reuilly, Lutheran and Reformed churches have commonly established church relations with Anglican churches.

These developments were welcomed and encouraged by the Lutheran-Reformed Joint Working Group, which in its report from 2001 recommended that churches of the two families should seek communion relations wherever possible. Although significant diversities within the two Christian world communions (CWCs) make the achievement of a global Lutheran-Reformed agreement of communion complicated, there are strong reasons for individual Lutheran and Reformed churches in many areas to seek closer relations, both nationally and regionally.

In July this year the first meeting of a new international Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission took place in Utrecht, in the Netherlands. The commission heard papers on the history and development of Lutheran-Reformed relations until the present day, on the quest for visible unity, and on current issues and challenges in Lutheran-Reformed relations. At its next meeting, in August 2007, the commission will consider the different understandings of confessions, their role and authority in the life of the churches and ecumenically.

In its report, the commission states:

It became clear to us that we want to work to be a contribution that will support further growth toward visible unity in reconciled diversity among our churches – both between Lutheran and Reformed families and among churches within each family – for the sake of the wider unity of the Church of Jesus Christ and for the sake of Christian witness and service for the world.

[...] We believe that our traditions offer a mode of life that challenges the atomizing tendencies and injustice of many of our societies. Together we affirm that ecclesial life is inseparable from Christian life, although that ecclesial life can take a variety of forms. Our two Reformation families can face our challenges with greater faithfulness together than apart. Indeed, experience of vulnerability may open us anew to the quest for Christian unity that is our gift and calling.

The joint meeting of the WARC Officers and the LWF Executive Committee was co-chaired by the presidents of the two communions, Rev. Dr Clifton Kirkpatrick, (Presbyterian Church, [USA]), and Bishop Mark S. Hanson (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).

Discussions focused on the present status of Lutheran-Reformed relations around the world, on various areas of shared challenges and cooperation, on the new Joint Consultative Commission between CWCs and the WCC, on future ecumenical assemblies, and on possible coordination of meetings of the governing bodies of the WCC and Christian world communions.

Regarding future global assemblies the WARC Officers and the LWF Executive Committee

- agree that the future of ecumenical assemblies is a matter of crucial importance for conciliar ecumenism in the 21st century and that there is an urgent need for a new type of assemblies, in which the broad, multilateral nature of the ecumenical movement is expressed more substantially, where representatives of churches, CWCs and church agencies for mission and development can process a commonly developed agenda, and where CWCs that have no relationship with the WCC at present might also be represented.
- strongly recommend that the first such new type of ecumenical assembly be considered to take place in 2013,
- urge the WCC to prepare for a decision in principle on this matter at the next meeting of the WCC Central Committee in 2008, and ask that their two general secretaries discuss this as soon as convenient with the general secretary of the WCC,
- request that this matter be prepared for substantive discussion at the first meeting, scheduled for May 2007, of the new Joint Consultative Commission between CWCs and the WCC,
- consider that after 2010 LWF and WARC would no longer hold global assemblies of their own, given a satisfactory development in this area.

The meeting ended with a common celebration of worship, in which the rainbow symbolized the hope expressed in Genesis 9, where God says to Noah: “I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”