

THE LUTHERAN COMMUNION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

The Lutheran Communion in Central and Eastern Africa (LUCCEA), in its second year of office management by an administrative secretary, was marked by a number of activities meant to rejuvenate and strengthen the communion within the sub-region and with partners in the worldwide Lutheran communion.

The move towards re-launching the sub-regional dynamism started in 2005 was met with full support from member churches who unanimously reiterated their commitment to stand together in the revitalization of the communion, to fulfill their common vision of a visible, pro-active and sustainable body to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. The focus of the previous year, aimed at meeting major sub-regional needs in communication, networking, ownership of the sub-regional body, active involvement of Christian members, and action together in areas of common interest, bore tangible fruit. We are delighted to share in the regional and worldwide LWF communion involved in the proclamation, witness and advocacy of Jesus Christ's Gospel to the world.

HIGHLIGHTS

The third LUCCEA General Assembly will be remembered as the climax of the 2006 achievements in the sub-region. The meeting took place after being postponed since 2001. Constitutionally it is scheduled to occur every two years. Held jointly with the Pastoral and Leadership Seminar and the Executive Committee Meeting, the General Assembly brought together all the member churches and most of their leaders and cleared away major constraints to the growth of the sub-regional communion. It focused on future plans to draw nearer to member churches and to solidify their unity. The Assembly extended invitations to partners and friends in the sub-region, the region and the world, although many of them were not able to attend for various reasons. The involvement of the member churches was visible through their financial contributions and through active participation in various duties related to the meetings.

The formulation of LUCCEA's vision and mission statements, and objectives to be at the forefront of the strategic plan for the next years, is a milestone in LUCCEA's journey geared towards strengthening the sub-regional communion. In the same way, LUCCEA has started the process of finding the best way for the sub-regional communion to become a sustainable organization where the activities of its main programs of church leadership, women and youth run smoothly and without impediment.

The production of LUCCEA calendars and brochures, though not having totally achieved their goal to become fundraising tools, has generally contributed to the increase in the visibility and ownership of the sub-regional communion. The failure to produce LUCCEA Magazine due to limited finances caused the sub-region to miss a great

opportunity for evangelization and experience-sharing, both in and outside the sub-regional communion. In addition, the failure to implement certain workshops planned for 2006 as means to rejuvenate the sub-region and to seek ways to respond to rising sub-regional pressing needs has been a disappointment. The lack of funds dependent on external resources has raised concern among the member churches. It became obvious that LUCCEA cannot move things the way it wants without a level of financial guarantee.

The equipping by the General Secretariat office, thanks to LWF/DMD, was crucial to the fulfillment of some of the planned activities and also contributed to cost reductions in the areas of communication, transport, etc.

The sub-region engaged in some internal reconciliation activities within a member church and externally with other member churches in order to foster unity. In one case, the reward of long-term negotiation and dialogue between two Lutheran churches in the same country resulted in the celebration of their becoming one Lutheran church. This is an encouraging example to be followed by some of our member churches to curb the new trend of mushrooming churches in some nations where starting a church becomes a symbol of power and financial control.

The sub-regional communion has begun harvesting the fruit of togetherness between member churches and building up mutual trust and confidence by extending invitations to each other to attend functions such as celebrations of historical events, or supreme decision making organs such as General Assemblies.

In 2006, the LUCCEA sub-regional communion had the opportunity to host two LWF global and regional meetings: the Nairobi + 4 HIV and AIDS Consultation held at the Methodist Guest House in Nairobi, Kenya and the Conference on Poverty held at the New Safari Hotel in Arusha, Tanzania.

As a clear sign of sub-regional spiritual growth, the communion has been challenged by younger churches in Burundi, Sudan and Uganda who have sought assistance either in the form of accompaniment or membership in LUCCEA.

Still challenging most of the sub-regional members are the rising number of refugees and displaced people, the increase in killer diseases such as HIV and AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, water borne diseases, and other social ills such as rape, and child abuse because of armed conflicts in the region.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

LUCCEA is slowly but surely shaping up. It is determined to make a difference by becoming closer to its member churches in order to deal with needs of common interests as well as the individual needs of each member church. It is in this context that the sub-regional communion has embarked on the formulation of a strategic plan for the next few years to systematically deal with sub-regional issues of great impact. LUCCEA is

working hard to identify new ways of resource generation to boost its sustainability and reduce its dependence on external resources. It is also determined to alleviate burdens on central office membership fees by drawing their resources right from the grassroots. The challenge is big and needs sustained long-range efforts to reach the target. In order to reach this goal, LUCCEA will still need the support of partners, external donors, back donors and well-wishing friends.

LUCCEA greatly appreciates the support received from partners and friends either directly or through the LWF structures. It still needs you to build up its sustainability through your donations to designated programs or your input to a number of issues mentioned in LUCCEA official documents or to a particular need as our churches seem sometimes overwhelmed by emergencies. The journey appears long, demanding and challenging, but with confidence in the Lord's support as a faithful companion, all problems should find solutions.



Mr. Muloko Kongolo
LUCCEA Administrative Secretary

