

**Message from
The European Church Leadership Consultation
Reykholt, Iceland, 8 -13 June 2005
The Lutheran World Federation – a Communion of Churches**

We, the representatives of the member churches of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Europe, met in Reykholt, Iceland, for a European Church Leadership Consultation, from 8 to 13 June 2005.

Our discussion focused on several issues that affect the churches in our regions. Bearing in mind the Message from the 2003 LWF Tenth Assembly, Winnipeg, Canada, our exchange repeatedly affirmed the increasing communion of our churches in Europe, and we committed ourselves to work toward strengthening the communion on a global level.

We discussed the ecumenical challenges for Lutheran churches in a changing European context.

In light of the recent changes in Europe, we remembered the Word in the letter of Paul to the Hebrews, “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*” (Heb 13:8).

Within this context we identified the following issues as important for our churches:

- 1) The partnership between our churches has developed into one based more on equality and spiritual communion; but there is still a demand for solidarity. Substantial differences still remain between the Lutheran churches, particularly between the “large” and “small” ones, as well as between those in the east and west (despite the fall of the Iron Curtain).
- 2) Europe has seen huge migration movements in the past. Another is currently underway, related to economic globalization and worldwide political developments. Increasingly, people are seeking work in other countries or establishing family relationships that transcend national and cultural borders. Their own religious affiliations move with them.

Migration, although a challenge, can have a positive impact on our churches and societies. In opening our doors to the brothers and sisters among us, we tread the path of becoming welcoming and hospitable churches.

Effective European legal implementation of people’s basic inviolable rights, regardless of their legal status, is crucial.

- 3) The LWF is one among other Christian World Communions participating in the ecumenical movement. In debate on the future of the ecumenical movement, we discussed possible practical and strategic choices for the Federation. We considered it important to avoid any overlap.

LWF PROGRAM COMMITTEE FOR MISSION AND DEVELOPMENT

September 1 to 3, 2005, Jerusalem – Bethlehem

AGENDA

EXHIBIT 6.1.1

In Europe, Lutheran churches are involved in different fellowships: the Conference of European Churches; Community of Protestant Churches in Europe - Leuenberg Church Fellowship; Porvoo Communion; and the communions of the Meissen Agreement, and Reuilly Agreement. It is an important task for the LWF to accompany these processes internationally, and to define the fields of closer cooperation and its own specific role among the other ecumenical structures.

- 4) In receiving the LWF document “Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment: An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission,” we have shared challenges and opportunities of being together as partners in God’s mission in the European context. We have been reminded of the gift of being “missional churches” and of how the recent changes in Europe have given us new chances for sharing visions, tasks and resources.
- 5) Models of leadership are currently being discussed in almost all ecumenical organizations and Christian communions. The understanding of the office of oversight, as it is taught and practiced in the Nordic churches forming the basis of the Porvoo Agreement, has a different emphasis than that among the churches of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe - Leuenberg Church Fellowship. We see it as important for the LWF to work toward a theological clarification, which preserves the communion within the Lutheran family, at the same time not endangering ecumenical relations.

The participation of women in leadership positions is still insufficient and should be increased. Our churches also have the task to take concrete steps toward increasing youth participation in our own decision-making bodies.

- 6) In our discussions, we have experienced that theological and traditional themes and practices can be dealt with in an atmosphere of mutual respect, so preventing some issues from invoking any potential church divisiveness.

Questions with regard to women’s ordination, and about sexuality and alternative forms of relationship, also need space within the communion where they can be dealt with similarly.

- 7) We appreciated the opportunity to meet at this consultation, and identified four main concerns for future gatherings:
 - A church leaders consultation should facilitate exchange between different forms of leadership in the LWF European member churches.
 - It should create enough room and time for specific exchange between each of the levels of leadership.
 - It should enable the leadership of the LWF member churches to bring forward elements of concern or advice and evaluation to the Federation’s structures.

LWF PROGRAM COMMITTEE FOR MISSION AND DEVELOPMENT

September 1 to 3, 2005, Jerusalem – Bethlehem

AGENDA

EXHIBIT 6.1.1

- It should be a platform of discussion for themes and subjects brought forward from the LWF structures to the European LWF church leadership and member churches.

- 8) We, participants in the European Church Leadership Consultation, express sincere gratitude to the leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland for their warm and generous hospitality and efficient organization in the unique and beautiful setting of their country. We appreciated the spiritual fellowship shared in the devotional life of the consultation.

May our churches be guided by the Holy Spirit to be a living example of Jesus who is “...*the same yesterday today and forever*” (Heb 13:8).

Reykholt, Iceland
11 June 2005