Lutheran World Information

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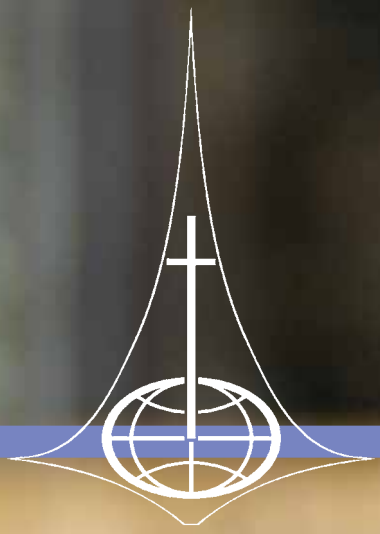
Called to Walk Together



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Called to Walk Together ..... I-IV

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Foreword

In Pursuing Christian Unity, We Have a Double Accountability

LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

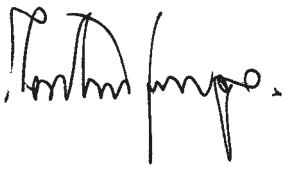
"To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical." We affirm this statement often, and the LWF Strategy 2012-2017 echoes with the refrain.

But why do we continue to pursue closer relationships among Christians when the results are often painfully slow to appear, and the world's suffering constantly presents us with more urgent needs? The answer lies in our baptism, which bestows on us a double accountability.

The first accountability is a familiar one. When we are baptized "into Christ," we receive, in the gift of our new identity, a deep connection with all other members of Christ's Body, the Church. The unity of the Church is our calling—to pursue mutual understanding, reconciliation, common *diakonia* or whatever might mend the separations we have created. In this way, we respond to the will of Jesus, whose prayer at the Last Supper expresses his desire for unity among his disciples.

But I'm concerned also with our accountability to those who bear the cost of Christian separations. Where Christian families cannot be nourished together at the Lord's Table because church leaders are not yet able to resolve theological differences; where Christians must explain in interfaith contexts why they cannot worship under one roof; where coordinated diaconal response to the needs of the world is undercut by our feuding; where gifts of one part of Christ's Body are withheld or denied in other parts because we have built walls of separation—then we are accountable to God and to one another for the painful consequences. Around the world Christian people yearn for Christian unity, which will not only strengthen their communities and enhance their mission but will also deepen their joy as they live as faithful Christians.

Often Christians have a "holy impatience." When they faithfully work, pray and study Holy Scripture together—as they do in countless settings around the world—then they become skeptical about the continuing delays in overcoming obstacles to unity. This is not to disparage the importance of the theological and ecclesial work which must be done—far from it. Divisions arose for substantial reasons, and they cannot simply be wished away. But the LWF must be accountable not only for the theological honesty, rigor and quest for truth in its ecumenical work, but also for its urgency and its love.



Rev. Martin Junge
LWF General Secretary

Walking Multiple Pathways toward Christian Unity

When we say "to be Lutheran is to be ecumenical," it means we are committed to working for the unity of the whole Church. But when other needs of the hurting world press forcibly upon us, how can we maintain this commitment? From the experience of recent years, we can offer some response.

Our diaconal care for the suffering of the world is not in competition with our ecumenical engagement: they strengthen one another. It is no surprise the Lutheran Communion has been marked by strong commitment to both activities which are essential parts of ecclesial life.

Practice "on the ground" in countless local situations shows how relationships among churches are built by common action in faithful response to need—often in advance of explicit frameworks for these relationships. At the same time, churches moving toward shared life, including worship and teaching, find encouragement for common work. The Anglican-Lutheran International Commission, for example, explored stories of this relationship between *diakonia* and communion on every continent.

Movement toward Christian unity does not always follow the same pattern. There is no single model, sequence or path.

Thus we do not need to decide which direction the energies of ecumenical efforts should flow first. Do initiatives come "up" from the grass roots, as local communities pioneer new kinds of Christian relationships appropriate to their contexts? Yes. Does advancement come from international agreements, forged by the painstaking work of church leaders and theologians, which are then commended to local churches for their "reception"? Yes. Can these distinct levels of work for unity strengthen and enhance one another? Indeed!

Dr Kathryn L. Johnson
© LWF/H. Putsman Penet

Lutheran-Mennonite relations illustrate this powerfully. The memorable reconciliation celebrated at the July 2010 Eleventh Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Stuttgart drew upon regional agreements already accomplished and upon many existing partnerships for common work. Today an amazing array of local collaborations and celebrations between Lutherans and Mennonites are energized by this new relationship.

Movement toward Christian unity takes patient persistence. Addressing separations embedded in our lives, sometimes for centuries, is not the work of a single proclamation or event—though we rejoice when these dramatic leaps occur!

Preparation for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 provides an opportunity to call attention to the fruits of ongoing change. It is impossible to imagine 2017 as a purely Lutheran celebration without ecumenical accountability and participation which emphasizes ongoing reform for the entire Church. That it would have been impossible to imagine such a collaborative and inclusive celebration only decades ago underlines the point.

We do not need to choose between ecumenical and interfaith work. As our awareness of religious pluralism grows, interfaith efforts rightly become more urgent. But this ought not to come at the expense of our commitments to Christian unity; the two tasks are both mutually supportive and distinctive. The methods and styles of dialogue are closely related, and draw strength from the same spiritual reservoirs of humility and awe.

Pursuit of Christian unity is not optional, nor a responsibility to be delegated to a few "ecumenists."

The multiplicity of impulses toward Christian unity, arising from all aspects of Church life and work, means that this is too diverse a task to be entrusted only to theologians—although their work is essential. The persistence of Christian divisions means that we cannot simply wait for Christian unity to arrive.

Finally, Christian unity is the concern of every Christian because it is rooted in the calling of all Christians. In baptism we are joined not only to Christ, but also to the other members of Christ's body, the Church. To be separated from them is to be wounded. To be united with them is to be strengthened in mission, in unity and in love.

An example of these fruits of unity is Leymah Roberta Gbowee, a Lutheran peace activist from Liberia, who was one of the winners of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize. Her study of peace building had been supported by US Lutherans—for work in a Mennonite university. From that formation she helped transform her entire society.

From such stories we draw hope and courage for the work ahead.

Kathryn L. Johnson served as LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs (2007-2011).

From the Regions

Lutherans worldwide are working to reconcile the scandal of division that remains in the Christian family by engaging, witnessing alongside and worshipping in communion with sisters and brothers in different denominations. These ecumenical ministries feed the hungry, build trust and model forgiveness. Lutherans are reaching out to and responding to the friendship of Anglicans, Mennonites, Orthodox, Reformed, Roman Catholics and others. Whether this ministry happens formally in bilateral dialogues, or it takes place informally in fellowship, this ecumenical witness is helping to create common ground, mutual recognition and unity.

Africa

Anglican – Lutheran Agreements Have Laid a Solid Foundation

We thank God for having opened our spiritual eyes and hearts so that Anglicans and Lutherans could reach agreements on the mission of the church and the role of the ordained ministry.

Anglican and Lutheran churches have for years moved toward different, binding forms of church fellowship, stemming from agreements. These include the *Meissen Common Statement* (1988) between the Church of England and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD); the *Porvoo Common Statement* (1992) between the British and Irish Anglican churches and most Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches; and the *Reuilly Common Statement* (1999) between the British and Irish Anglican churches and the French Lutheran and Reformed churches.

Prominent among reports produced by the ongoing Anglican-Lutheran dialogue are the *Niagara Report* (1987), focusing on the mission of the church and the role of the ordained ministry, and the *Diaconate as an Ecumenical Opportunity* (1996).

These dialogues and agreements, dating as far back as 1970, have laid a solid foundation for the Third Anglican-Lutheran International Commission (ALIC-III) to build on.

Of great interest is the regional dialogue between the [Lutheran] Church of Sweden and the Anglican churches that dates back to the Lambeth Conference of 1888, which invited members of the Swedish Lutheran church to partake in the sacrament of the Eucharist in Anglican churches. It went further, saying:

> *That in the opinion of this Conference, earnest efforts should be made to establish more friendly relations between the Scandinavian and Anglican Churches; and that approaches on the part of the Swedish Church, with a view to the mutual explanation of differences, be most gladly welcomed, in order to the ultimate establishment, if possible, of intercommunion on sound principles of ecclesiastical polity. (Resolution 14)*

The agreement included invitations to attend services celebrating the consecration of bishops and each other's conferences and general assembly meetings. This was easier in Europe and the Americas but almost impossible in Africa. There is still a great need to work together in Africa and other developing countries, where religious differences can spark deadly wars.

In 2006 ALIC III met in Moshi, Tanzania, where it set up working groups to deal with topics, such as Lutheran-Anglican relations around the world, the historic episcopate, emerging opportunities for joint mission and diaconal ministry, ministry exchanges, cooperation on theological training, ecclesiology and the language of unity.

Bishop Dr Ndanganeni Phaswana © Private

ALIC III met in five different countries: Tanzania, India and Sweden, where it was hosted by The Lutheran World Federation; and Canada and the United States, where it was hosted by the Anglican Communion.

The advantages of the Anglican and Lutheran communions working together in Africa far outweigh the disadvantages. Africa is scrambling for scarce resources. If the two communions can combine efforts they can overcome that and present a united witness to the hungry, and fulfill Jesus' petition: that all may be one (John 17:11, 21).

Ndanganeni Phaswana is bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, and a member of the LWF Council. He was a member of the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission from 2006 to 2011 when the commission finished its work.

Deaconesses Illustrate Character of Tanzanian Church

Deaconesses play an important role in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), reaching out to both Christians and non-Christians through a variety of services.

The Ushirika wa Neema (Community of Grace) Lutheran Sisters are a vivid example of the deaconess services within the ELCT. Founded in 1980 in Moshi in the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania, they offer compassionate and faithful service to all people.

The deaconesses serve in different parts of the country as teachers, accountants, social workers, pastors, medical personnel and agriculturalists. Some sisters continue to study as theologians, midwives or veterinarians. Their services are a blessing to many people.

The sisters' motto is "Prayer and Work" and they support themselves

by working in the agricultural sector, making communion wafers, selling altar wine, making clerical gowns, operating day-care centers and running the Ushirika wa Neema Orphanage Center.

The Lutheran Sisters have trained many committed women to serve in church and society.

However, today the sisters face a number of challenges, including a growing need for their services, a lack of new candidates and a shortage of funds to train new deaconesses. In the midst of these difficulties, we still plan to start a lay community of women known as Dorcas, who will live and work in the community according to their professional calling, but meet for retreats and seminars.

ELCT deaconesses Adventina Kyamanywa and Jerda Shumuni (second and third from left) during their studies at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland © Ecumenical Institute Bossey

Sister Agnes Lema, deaconess leader at ELCT's Ushirika wa Neema, wrote this article.

Reflection on the Forum on Bilateral Dialogues

Because of the way Christianity was brought to Africa, Christians on the continent have hardly raised serious questions on the "scandal of division." Being Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Orthodox or Pentecostal is largely taken for granted, seen as nothing anomalous. This attitude has worked against the ecumenical question.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) Tenth Forum on Bilateral Dialogues will be held in March 2012 in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania—the first time it takes place in Africa. The event therefore presents itself as a moment to launch a new era of dialogue among Christian groups, underlining that the unity of the Church is not an end in itself, but a means to fulfil the mission of the Church to spread the gospel and its values in a world which needs it so much in order to achieve greater justice, freedom and peace. That is good news to Africa.

There is immense potential for dialogue to unleash new energies through reciprocity and an exchange of gifts among Christians, "so that the world may believe." My hope is that during the Dar-es-Salaam meeting, that "door of peace" will mark that moment, so that fidelity to Jesus Christ, friendship and brotherly emulation will triumph over estrangement and will lead to a strengthened Christianity for a better world.

Monsignor Gosbert Byamungu © Private

Tanzanian Roman Catholic priest Monsignor Gosbert Byamungu works with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity at the Vatican.

Asia

Ecumenism between Lutherans and Roman Catholics in Japan

After a Sunday worship service at the Church of St Ignatius, in front of Yotsuya Station in Tokyo on 31 October 2004, a stream of people moved toward the church. Most of them were Lutherans who had already attended worship services at their churches in and around the metropolitan area of Tokyo. They were there that afternoon to take part in a special worship service in the Chapel of the Mother of God at the Jesuit church, which is probably the largest Roman Catholic congregation in Japan.

The event was unique in that it was the first joint worship service in history between the Roman Catholic Church in Japan (RCCJ) and the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC). The worship was presided over jointly by the Roman Catholic archbishop of Tokyo and the president of JELC, with Dr Yoshikazu Tokuzen, professor emeritus of Japan Lutheran College and Seminary and a member of the Lutheran – Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, as preacher. The worship had been planned in order to celebrate the completion of the Japanese translation of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), signed in October 1999 by The Lutheran World Federation and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

At the 2004 celebration in Tokyo, Roman Catholic and Lutheran worshippers packed the church and those who could not get inside the chapel stood outside to take part in the worship.

Prof. H. Augustine Suzuki © Private

This service was one of the visible results of the joint efforts of the two churches facilitated by the Ecumenism Committee, which had been meeting twice a year for three decades. The committee has also produced a statement of mutual recognition on baptism, which was accepted by the two churches.

Christians are in a minority in Japan, accounting for less than one percent of the total population of 125 million. Christianity was brought to Japan in 1549 by Francis Xavier, one of the founders of the Society of Jesus. Protestant Christianity reached the country only 151 years ago. The history of Christianity in Japan is one of persecution. Several decades after its introduction into Japanese life, Christianity

was banned with severe punishments. The ban continued until 1873.

Christians in Japan are keenly aware of the importance of ecumenical efforts in this predominantly secular society. The 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 will be a major test for future ecumenical efforts. I sincerely hope that the JELC and the RCCJ will jointly commemorate this anniversary, which will have a significant impact, not only on ecumenism here, but on Japanese society as a whole.

H. Augustine Suzuki is professor of Church History at the Japan Lutheran College and Seminary.

Europe

Finnish Church's Hospitality Offers Space to Other Churches

Finland's location between two cultural empires is reflected in church architecture and art found here. We are directly connected to the traditions of the medieval Roman Catholic Church, but have also been strongly influenced by the architecture and image theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Is it because of that history and location that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) has its roofs so high and walls so far apart?

Although the ELCF is a majority church, it has been hospitable to other, more or less minority churches by offering space for worship and meetings and working together with sister churches on social welfare efforts. Various spiritual movements and groups can be found within the ELCF, and these revival movements have established their own communities. Finland is relatively large geographically but has a small population (5.3 million people). The ELCF has been a very active member of global and regional church organizations and generously supported the work of The Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches and new networks like the Global Christian Forum.

In Finland, we have space. We have had strong challenges and threats so we have learned to work together. We respect honesty and we are also known as diplomats, and for promoting equality of rights. Newer religious groupings include friends of Taizé and people who meet in "Thomas Masses" or quiet retreats. All of these groups have their own emphases, but they have found space in existing churches. They often invite us to taste and feel the inner essence of Christianity in new ways, and they bring people from various denominational backgrounds together.

Finnish people do not talk a lot about their faith. It is a private issue. Even when going to church, a Finn often chooses to sit alone in a quiet corner. Is it so that from a quiet corner we are able to see, listen and feel the different traditions in a peaceful way? Prayer is the heartbeat of religion in Finland. Many parents and grandparents teach children to pray with words that may have been passed down through the generations. Sanctity is also experienced outdoors in forests and by lakes and the sea, encountering the harshness or beauty of nature. Praying together during ecumenical events or at celebrations of mixed marriages is not difficult.

Rev. Pirjo-Liisa Penttinen © Private

The Finnish Ecumenical Council promotes Christian unity on the national and local levels, utilizing an array of publications, programs and meetings. It has 11 churches with full membership, five observer churches and 17 associate partner non-governmental organizations. The council is currently chaired by a Roman Catholic bishop. The most recent assembly was hosted by Pentecostals. A successful form of ecumenical education is KETKO, a four-weekend training of young people, which features an introduction to various denominations and sees the youth attending worship services of those traditions. It encourages continuing hospitality between churches by a new generation, which faces global challenges such as immigration in a new way.

Pirjo-Liisa Penttinen is General Secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association of Finland.

Lutherans and Orthodox in Finland Live Side by Side

Finland serves as a model country for ecumenism. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland, national institutions themselves, live side by side, in mutual respect and learning.

On many occasions during the past 1,000 years Finland has been divided in two politically and ecclesiastically. Christianity first arrived in Finland from Byzantium through Russia. Soon afterwards the Roman Catholic Church was brought here during the northern Crusades.

Memories of past difficulties have been erased from our minds, leaving us with profound mutual trust and cooperation among the diverse religious, linguistic and ethnic groups. Minorities enjoy special support from the state.

In spite of its small size the Orthodox Church functions today as a significant community, whose visibility and influence far exceeds its 62,000 members. A large number of artists, journalists and intellectuals play a crucial role among many who have adopted Orthodoxy. The church is a media favorite.

This development owes much to the generosity of the Lutheran church. During World War II most of the Orthodox were evacuated from east-

ern Finland, and they had to rebuild their homes and churches among the Lutheran population in central and western Finland. Lutheran parishes offered their support and parish homes to the Orthodox.

In Finland today, religious education is available to all children according to their confession. Lutheran and Orthodox students study theology side by side at the University of Eastern Finland. Both churches collect church taxes from their members with the help of the state. Since 1925 the two churches have worked together in the Finnish Ecumenical Council.

We are particularly grateful to the Lutherans for creating for us a spiritual climate and space that has allowed our Orthodox church to grow and flourish in Finland. No discordant notes have been heard even though the popularity of Orthodoxy during our generation has exceeded all expectations.

Perhaps we should welcome representatives of larger Orthodox patriarchates and churches to Finland to learn what is possible in an atmosphere of ecumenical openness and mutual learning, even when one large church exists next to smaller ones.

Metropolitan Ambrosius of Helsinki
© LWF/Jim Elfstroëm

Lutherans have taught us congregational singing, methods of Christian education and the importance of vernacular in worship. The Orthodox Church happily uses the Lutheran translations of the Bible and the creeds.

By the same token, the far-reaching liturgical revival in the Lutheran church has been influenced by our liturgical tradition. The blessing of homes, prayers for the dead, as well as the respect and veneration of icons serve as examples of this mutual learning.

This openness between churches that we experience in Finland has played a profound role in helping the churches in Western society maintain an inclusive approach to local culture and society. Rather than adopting a ghetto mentality, we have kept our doors and windows open. This spiritual and intellectual openness and freedom, supported by our strong sense of identity, contributes a great deal to our mission and witness today.

The Lutheran theologians of Tübingen in the 1570s actively sought a unity of apostolic faith between our churches by corresponding with Patriarch Jeremiah of Constantinople. Today, we in Finland practice a "dialogue of love" through family life, since most Orthodox are married to Lutherans. Mutual trust and support also grow from our deepening experience of common faith in today´s world, where doctrinal barriers seem to be rapidly losing their significance. Gradual abandonment of confessional identity and growing awareness of our common catholic consciousness calls us to be one (John 17:21).

Metropolitan Ambrosius of Helsinki is head of the Orthodox Church of Finland.

Unity in Reconciled Diversity: Community of Protestant Churches in Europe

The community of European Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches dates back to the Leuenberg Agreement, which was signed by the churches' synods in 1973, with the signatories entering into pulpit and table fellowship, and committing to a common witness and service at the local, regional, and European levels, and to common theological development.

The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) now comprises 105 churches, including all of Europe's churches from these traditions and several South American churches that had been founded by German immigrants, as well as Europe's Methodist churches, which joined in 1997. While some of Scandinavia's churches (Iceland, Finland and Sweden) have yet to sign, they still participate in CPCE projects.

Dr André Birmelé © Private

Following several years of dialogue, particularly concerning Holy Communion, a common understanding of the gospel was worked out in which the mutual condemnations of the 16th century can no longer be viewed as maintaining their validity today. Unity in reconciled diversity means that every church upholds its own tradition while however understanding the other churches involved as a true expression of the one Church of Jesus Christ.

This has tangible effects. The common recognition of ministry allows pastors to serve in other churches and allows church members to join in another tradition. In some countries (such as France and the Netherlands) the churches have formed a union that provides most services, while taking the various traditions into account. This opens up new possibilities for common service in different situations.

The CPCE churches have set up a common European secretariat in Vienna, Austria, which takes on all the important tasks between the assemblies held every six years.

One of the most important tasks that the CPCE churches have chosen to face together is common theological development. The past several years have, for instance, seen the publication of crucial common texts on topics such as the common understanding of the Church and on evangelization. The current focus topics include the authority of scripture and the understanding of ministry. Results will be presented at the next assembly in Florence in 2012.

The CPCE's strongest challenges include the question of catholicity and commitment. Despite considerable progress, the individual churches often find it difficult to view themselves as part of a European community. They usually adhere strongly to their autonomy and are reluctant, for example, when it comes to adopting assembly resolutions as binding. While the idea of a common European synod raises strong objections, it is precisely this question that will determine the future of this community. Unity in reconciled diversity also requires the ability to speak out as one, not least in ethical and social-political matters.

André Birmelé is an adjunct professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France. He is a member of the Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine in France.

Lutheran – Orthodox Dialogue: Significance and Expectations

If I am to address this topic as a Lutheran theologian living in a country with an Orthodox background, then it would be about something that is of direct relevance to both of the two small Evangelical Lutheran churches in Romania that are members of The Lutheran World Federation. As a Lutheran in an Orthodox context, one continually comes in contact with the foreign world of the Eastern Church. The question of Christian unity comes into play, for example, when Easter and other related holidays are celebrated on different dates, when people of different confessions are married, and when confessionally mixed congregations are convened on special occasions. These meetings lead to a number of practical pastoral issues, but also to mutual theological questioning. This in fact has a long history within the territory of today's Romania, one which reaches back to the Reformation era, as reflected in a centuries-old wealth of experience.

At its 2011 meeting in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany, the Lutheran – Orthodox Joint Commission marked 30 years of dialogue. © Caren Pfahl

It is therefore no surprise that the theological dialogue between the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Romanian Orthodox Church, to the inclusion also of Protestant churches in Romania, has proved to be particularly fruitful. I myself have been able to participate as a Lutheran theologian in 12 such meetings since 1979, meetings that have led to considerable results in the areas of the understanding of scripture and tradition, soteriology, Christology, and ecclesiology. It was indeed within this context that my translation into German was published of the three-volume "Orthodox Dogmatics" written by the most prominent Romanian theologian, Dumitru Stăniloae.

Dr Hermann Pitters © Private

Some of the insights gained from this bilateral dialogue could also be applied to the international Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue between the LWF and Orthodoxy as a whole. I am grateful to have been able to take part in this dialogue from the beginnings in Helsinki in 1981 (and actually already with preparatory meetings in 1978). As I believe, it is important that the goal was set from the very beginning to help the two church traditions to grow closer together and thus to work toward common ground, mutual recognition and unity.

Despite differing dogmatic underpinnings, such as the contrast between the Lutheran justification through faith alone and the Orthodox deification (*theosis*) as central tenets, upon deeper understanding one can find an astounding degree of agreement. I believe that, from the Eastern European point of view, there are a great many opportunities to be had for the two groups to come even closer together. The Third European Ecumenical Assembly held in 2007 in Sibiu, the town in which I live, opened new doors especially for the churches of Eastern Europe. This permits us to hope that there will be new impetus for the ecumenical movement, and that it will find its way out of a period of stagnation. The closing report of the 15th meeting of the Lutheran – Orthodox Joint Commission in Wittenberg, Germany May/June 2011, also underscores this hope.

Hermann Pitters is a member of the Lutheran – Orthodox Joint Commission. He is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania.

Meeting around the Table Deepens Levels of Fellowship

The icon, The Hospitality of Abraham by Andrei Rublev, which is also known as the icon of the Holy Trinity, depicts three angels seated together at the patriarch's table. The perfect fellowship which exists among the three persons of the Trinity is beautifully portrayed, offering an excellent symbol representing both the goal and the process of the dialogue between Lutherans and Orthodox facilitated by The Lutheran World Federation.

Dialogue is a meeting around a table—initially a meeting of strangers, if not enemies. In the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue this meeting of strangers has grown to be a fellowship of friends. As we speak together we learn about one another and our respective beliefs, but something far more important also happens: we come to know one another. We could learn about one another's theology from textbooks without the trouble and expense of travel, but at the table we build fellowship.

The table depicted in the icon is not simply a dialogue table; it is a dinner table. At meetings of the commission we also sit together for meals. This breaking of bread together, though it is not the full eucharistic communion we seek, brings us beyond dialogue to a deeper level of fellowship. As we eat together we weave threads into the tapestry of friendship. Through this friendship, we learn to see the world from the perspective of the other and begin to distinguish between issues of truth and issues of perspective that may cause divisions at the dialogue table.

As we think of the future of the Lutheran – Orthodox dialogue we can see that we face serious challenges. We are moving to the stage at which embracing a deeper relationship will require that we grapple with the issues on which we have the most fundamental disagreements. We have laid the foundation for this work through joint statements on many important topics, including revelation, Scripture, tradition, the ecumenical councils, salvation and, in recent years, the mystery of the Church. I believe that through this process we have been mutually enriched and have come to a deeper understanding of the Christian faith which we share.

In addition to revisiting areas of disagreement which were left unresolved in previous texts, developments within the Lutheran communion over the past few decades have made it urgent that we face serious issues regarding ordination and human sexuality. As we struggle together in dialogue we must remember that the road is difficult because we are all seeking to be faithful to the truth, though we may see that truth differently. May God grant us the courage to stand for the truth as we see it, the humility to learn and to change when we are wrong, and the love to dialogue in a spirit of respect and gentleness, bearing in mind at all times that the goal is the salvation of all.

As we struggle through this process, we must not forget that the table in the icon is not merely a dialogue table or a dinner table; it is an altar. On that altar our Lord Jesus will give his life for the life of the world. Our work of dialogue will not be finished until we can gather together at that altar and share together in his body and blood. That day may not yet be imminent, but this makes it all the more urgent that we work together in dialogue.

Dr Nathan Hoppe
© Private

Nathan Hoppe is a missionary of the Orthodox Christian Missionary Center (OCMC) to Albania, and professor at Holy Resurrection Seminary in St Vlash, Albania.

Latin America & the Caribbean

Chile: By Working Together, "Another World Can Be Possible"

Chilean society, which is 72 percent Roman Catholic, faced a major challenge when, at the end of 1999, the country passed a law granting equal legal status to all churches and religious organizations.

The law's approval fulfilled one of the major desires of the Protestant Evangelical community in Chile.

Since then one of the main commitments of the Evangelical community in Chile has been to achieve religious equality before the law, and recognition of the contributions made by Evangelicals and Protestants in education, health, culture and the arts since the beginning of the republic. The law was a great achievement, but it was important to make it known to the Chilean public and have it accepted by ordinary citizens and public institutions in the country and abroad.

In 2005 the Expanded Commission of Evangelical and Protestant Organizations comprising eight Evangelical, Pentecostal and Protestant churches was formed. It includes the Lutheran churches in Chile, which are also part of other ecumenical bodies, where they work alongside the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. My own Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH) has been a member of the Ecumenical Fraternity of Chile since its founding in 1973.

At the request of the Protestant churches, in 2005 President Ricardo Lagos established 31 October as the National Day of the Evangelical and Protestant Churches in recognition of the diaconal, educational and social work being done by the churches.

In 2006 the Expanded Commission established the National Day of Evangelical and Protestant Churches commission and appointed me as its moderator. During the first year we worked very hard at the national level for the recognition of Martin Luther and the history of the Reformation to be accepted as bases for the Evangelical, Pentecostal and Protestant identity. Chile's president at that time, Michelle Bachelet, invited representatives of all the Evangelical and Protestant organizations to the presidential palace to celebrate 31 October. Cultural events, lectures, panels and other celebrations gave visibility to this significant date, which has since become a set part of the annual plans.

In 2008 President Bachelet declared this day a public holiday, which demonstrates the religious diversity in Chile today.

It is important to note that my presence as a woman in leadership has been accepted from the beginning by Catholics, Evangelicals, Pentecostals and Protestants in the religious sphere, as well as by officials in government circles. The position I held was more important than my being a woman. As time has gone on, I have received the recognition and the respect for the work I have accomplished that every human being—man or woman—created in God's image deserves.

It has been a constant challenge and a great responsibility for me to work to make room for women as leaders and help society to understand that women have the capabilities to make a great contribution to society. However, we do not have the same opportunities as men because we live in a male-dominated, classist, sexist and hierarchical society.

Women in leadership positions in various sectors of our country have been working to break down the barriers erected by centuries of exclusion, and this is slowly beginning to have an effect.

Rev. Dr Gloria Rojas Vargas © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

In my new pastoral work in Punta Arenas, the most southerly Lutheran church in the world, I continue to participate in pastoral groupings, where I am the only woman. Both the pastors and Roman Catholic Bishop Bernardo Bastres expressed their wish to participate in the liturgy to be celebrated in our community on 31 October.

In a society that is increasingly individualistic and discriminatory, we need to develop a good understanding of what we can do together. This will help us develop common strategies as we come closer to celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, with the clear commitment to work so that "another world can be possible."

Gloria Rojas Vargas is a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Magallanés, a congregation of the IELCH. She is LWF vice president for the Latin American and Caribbean region and a member of the Meeting of Officers and Council.

North America

Canadian Lutherans and Mennonites Strengthen Relationships

Since the July 2010 Eleventh Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Stuttgart, Germany, and in particular the action to issue an apology to the Mennonite World Council for the persecution of Anabaptists during the Reformation, Canadian Lutherans and Mennonites have been working to strengthen our relationship and apply this global statement of reconciliation in local churches.

Mennonite Church Canada (MCC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) jointly prepared a study resource intended for Lutheran and Mennonite congregations to do in partnership in order to help them understand our joint history, the meaning of forgiveness, and to begin to vision where we go from here. The resource, *Healing Memories, Reconciling in Christ: A Lutheran-Mennonite Study Guide for Congregations* has been distributed to the congregations of both churches. The study guide can be found online at **http://elcic.ca/Documents/HealingMemoriesOnlineFinal-March21.pdf**.

In November 2010, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary in partnership

Rev. Dr Willard Metzger (left) and Bishop Susan C. Johnson at the July 2011 ELCIC National Convention. © Mennonite Church Canada

with Conrad Grebel College (both in Waterloo, Ontario) hosted a two-day conference that explored the implications of the Stuttgart actions for two churches that live side by side in many communities and whose relationships often bridge entire families. This event, which included a Service of Reconciliation, brought together clergy, theologians and leaders from the ELCIC's Eastern Synod and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. Other regions in the country are planning similar events.

Bishop Susan C. Johnson
© Michael Hudson

Modeling the spirit of this new way forward, ELCIC National Bishop Susan C. Johnson attended and brought greetings to the MCC Assembly in Waterloo and MCC General Secretary Rev. Dr Willard Metzger attended and brought greetings to the ELCIC National Convention in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Both events took place in 2011 and were a first for each church.

In his greetings to the ELCIC, Metzger noted that church leaders have been seeking opportunities for collaboration. He celebrated his "growing friendship" with the ELCIC National Bishop Johnson. Metzger also shared a personal story: his great-great-great grandfather was a German Lutheran adopted by Mennonites in Kitchener, Ontario. "So this is a bit of a homecoming," he said. "Perhaps, here I have a long lost relative."

Bishop Johnson thanked Metzger for his greetings and offered a gift—a baptism chalice. "This is a sign of hope for the whole church," she said, "That if we as churches can move towards reconciliation, within our own church we can find that same reconciliation."

ELCIC National Bishop Susan C. Johnson is the LWF vice president for the North America region. She is a member of the LWF Meeting of Officers and Council.

Full Communion in the ELCA: Boldly Reaching Out

The 1991 policy statement, *Ecumenism: The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,* states this church's intention to be "bold to reach out in several directions simultaneously to all with whom it may find agreement in the Gospel." The ELCA has adopted full communion agreements with a range of partners: with three churches in the Reformed tradition (the Presbyterian Church USA, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ) in 1997; with the Moravian Church in America and with the Episcopal Church in 1999; and with the United Methodist Church in 2009. Because the ELCA has found ways to be in full communion with churches that are not in such relationships with one another, it is able to serve at times as an ecumenical bridge church.

The ELCA and the churches with which it is in full communion recognize each other's confessions of faith, sacraments, and ordained ministries as valid and pledge to work together in evangelism and outreach. While the partner churches remain constitutionally independent, their ecclesial lives are interconnected through joint prayer and worship, shared ministries and mutual consultation, for the sake of shared mission.

Each full communion agreement establishes a coordinating committee to facilitate reception at all levels. Each coordinating committee has adopted a three-year plan to guide its work and implement its goals, such as encouraging the churches to study and live into the ecumenical commitment, identifying occasions to worship together, coordinating mission and ministry, and collaborating in decision making. An *Orderly Exchange* document for each full communion agreement defines procedures for clergy exchanges. Three of the committees (Lutheran-Episcopal, Lutheran-Moravian and Episcopal-Moravian) will be exploring ways to coordinate their work as coordinating committees. A new committee gathering the three Reformed churches and the ELCA will report on how Scripture is used in decision making in the churches.

The ELCA is a partner in over 15 federated or union congregations, such as Epiphany Lutheran and Episcopal Church in Marina, California, and at least 18 joint campus ministries such as the Episcopal-Lutheran chaplaincy at Howard University, Washington DC. There are currently 47 clergy from full communion partner churches serving ELCA congregations and ministries. The ELCA has coordinated disaster relief with Episcopalians in Mississippi and Iowa, and with Moravians in Haiti. Joint training for military chaplains is being planned with the Episcopal Church as well as the possibility of a shared staff person in Washington DC for international advocacy. Lutherans and Moravians share joint missionary training.

Dr Mitzi J. Budde
© Private

The ELCA has established a rich nexus of full communion relationships in order to pray, serve, and share with brothers and sisters in Christ in witness and in mission. Now the ELCA seeks to sustain and deepen its ecumenical vision, building upon the unity given in Christ Jesus, through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

Mitzi J. Budde, ELCA associate in ministry, is co-chair of the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee, and head librarian and professor of Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, Virginia, USA.

Interfaith Perspectives

While some make interfaith relations a priority, others argue that ecumenical dialogue is more substantial, as Christians share a common faith. In the Lutheran communion interfaith commitment focused on creating justice and peace in society is a substantial issue. Still, there is urgent need to explore more deeply how ecumenical and interfaith relations can enhance and nurture one another. Insights from LWF's humanitarian work show that perceptions and reality about the other's faith can be different.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Mutually Enhance One Another

Many people of other faiths know about the wide diversity of Christian churches. They are also aware of the fact that, time and again, tensions between different churches occur. Muslim dialogue partners from Indonesia recently asked me: "Why does each Christian congregation need its own church buildings? Don't they share the same faith? Why can't they pray together?" These questions opened a vibrant interfaith conversation on how we deal with the internal diversity within our faith communities. We looked at theological, historical and cultural aspects of such diversity and at the experiences that gave birth to the ecumenical movement. The dialogue was most intense as we shared our understandings of worship and prayer and as we talked about the meaning of the worshipping community for us.

A Somali girl in class at the LWF-run Wadajir Primary School in Ali Addeh refugee camp, Djibouti. © LWF/Melany Markham

In public discourse, there is currently the tendency to prioritize interfaith relations over ecumenical relations. In order to solve burning issues in our societies, cooperation between people of different faiths is seen as a major public issue. Ecumenical relations are seen as a minor issue, an internal Christian affair, like a private dispute within the family. For Lutherans, however, ecumenical commitment is not just an internal ecclesial issue. It is an important part of the church's public accountability and witness in society.

Rev. Simone Sinn © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

In view of the radical fragmentation of society, ecumenical relations can epitomize the need for, and indeed, the possibility of reconciliation. An important contribution of Christians today is to give an account of ecumenical progress, especially of the processes that illustrate how we constructively engage in relationships with different theological and cultural traditions. Some of these experiences can serve as models of how shared understanding can be achieved through arduous historical and theological study as well as a transformative spiritual process. The most recent example for Lutherans was the task of healing deeply painful memories of the history of conflicts between Lutherans and Mennonites.

Interfaith relations also are often haunted by wounded memories. Conflicts and wars have left bloody traces on our religious identities. In order to forge a just and peaceful future between different religious communities, we need to work on a shared understanding of our entangled histories. We need to learn how to move beyond identities that are built on hostility towards others and how to constructively live with diversity. Such work has to be focused on concrete and specific issues.

While some make interfaith relations a priority, others argue that ecumenical dialogue is more substantial, as Christians share a common faith. However, in the Lutheran Communion we believe that interfaith commitment focused on creating justice and peace in society is a substantial issue. Furthermore, interfaith partners want to engage in dialogue on faith perspectives as we see in the Muslim letter "A Common Word" sent to Christian churches in 2007, and in the document "Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism," published in 2010.

We urgently need to explore more deeply how ecumenical and interfaith relations can enhance and nurture

one another. Both kinds of relations are critical to the public discourse. One important issue will be to work on a shared understanding of our entangled histories in order to help build a common future. Working towards such shared understanding enhances mutual trust. This would be a significant contribution to public life.

Simone Sinn is a research associate at the Seminary for Systematic Theology in the Theological Faculty of the University of Münster, Germany.

Faith and Work Perspectives from a Refugee Camp

Just inside the gates of the compound where many humanitarian relief workers live at the Dadaab refugee camp in northeastern Kenya, there is a small, square, blue building. There is no furniture inside and only wire netting covers the windows.

But every morning and evening a group of men gather here—to pray.

The mosque exists due to the efforts of Mohamed, who works for The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The LWF manages the camps at Dadaab for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

As a Muslim in a Christian organization, Mohamed admits he was at first worried about joining the LWF.

"Some people told me it was a Christian organization and that there would be restrictions." He consulted religious leaders. "They told me that they [LWF] would not interfere with your religion—you can work with them and help the community," he recalls their advice. In the one year he has worked for the organization, he has seen that perception and reality are different. "People have the perception that you might be influenced or told to be a Christian," he says, explaining he is free to practice his faith.

Ms Melany Markham in Dadaab, Kenya. © LWR/Jonathan Ernst

"I have learnt what the LWF is, and how people interact… I'm comfortable," says Mohamed.

Prayer is an important part of worship. Devout Muslims pray five times a day, between sunrise and sunset, a practice Mohamed maintains working for the LWF, especially as the mosque is only a couple of minutes' walk from his office.

"I normally like to read the Quran in the morning and if I get time in the afternoon, but most of the time I'm working, so I read it on Sundays," he says.

He talks of good relations with the LWF Christian staff, adding that he recognizes key principles of Islam are similar to those of Christianity.

"As Muslims we have to protect women and children," Mohamed explains. "Muslims must adhere to their religion and follow the prophets and the Holy Quran. We are not allowed to do something bad to others, because we have to respect other human beings."

Mohamed is among hundreds of Kenyans of Somali origin working for humanitarian organizations in the world's biggest refugee camp. Dadaab currently hosts more than 460,000 refugees, a majority of them fleeing famine and insecurity in Somalia.

LWF communications consultant Melany Markham wrote this article.

Somali refugees in Dadaab pray on the morning of Eid. © Reuters/Jonathan Ernst, courtesy Trust.org – AlertNet

Youth Perspectives

Lutheran youth are at the heart of the movement to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world ecumenically. They respond to the critical issues in their own contexts, working alongside sisters and brothers from other churches in practical ways that inspire the wider ecumenical movement. Youth collaborate to decrease the risk of HIV in Africa, support the rights of children and young people in Latin America and work for holistic peace worldwide. In the process they also challenge their churches, showing not only that they want to be involved but often that they are leading the way.

Cameroon: Ecumenical Approach Strengthens Youth Response to HIV and AIDS

The February 2011 national meeting of Protestant youth, sponsored by the Council of Protestant Churches of Cameroon (CEPCA), identified response to the spread of HIV and AIDS as a priority for the re-launching of its program.

Meeting at Yaoundé, the capital city, delegates noted that young people are increasingly exposed to HIV and AIDS in the country due to their risky behavior, including injecting drugs and excessive alcohol consumption.

In addition, they pointed out that ignorance, socio-cultural barriers regarding sex and the status of women, stigmatization and poverty were factors in the spread of the virus. They also noted the absence of a theological discourse and harmonized church policy on the question of AIDS.

Mr Bertrand Tientcheu © Private

The struggle against the spread of HIV among young people will be at the heart of the CEPCA's youth programs for the next three years. An action plan emphasizing capacity building, advocacy geared to decision makers, the pooling of resources and use of interactive media will link efforts to stop the spread of the virus with reproductive health, sexual rights of young people and improving socioeconomic conditions.

The youth programs will be designed to strengthen the churches' health services to be more welcoming for young people in order to break down the myths and taboos persisting about sex, and HIV and AIDS.

Bertrand Tientcheu of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon is a member of the All Africa Conference of Churches general committee. He has served with the regional office of the WCC-led Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA) in Accra, Ghana.

Let Young People Participate in Peace Work

During the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) sponsored by the World Council of Churches from 17 to 25 May 2011 in Kingston, Jamaica, participants talked about the peace work that individuals and groups are undertaking in their communities.

Delegates gained a holistic understanding of the concept of peace by focusing on different aspects of peacemaking, including peace in the community, with the earth, in the marketplace and among different peoples. By looking at peace in such a broad way, churches can raise awareness among their members and congregations about how both large and small contributions are necessary in working for a peaceful world.

Ms Sanna Eriksson © Private

Young people are present in the struggle for peace, often working hard with few resources. Initiative and willingness to work for change are rarely lacking. For the ecumenical movement, the challenge is therefore to emphasize what young people are already doing, listen to their ideas and provide them with resources. By helping to connect different groups working for peace, a wider understanding among youth regarding their participation in an international ecumenical movement will be achieved.

The peace efforts of young people in one part of the world will inspire others to take part and incorporate ideas into already existing projects. Let young individuals participate as speakers at events and let their struggles be examples for the peace work of the ecumenical movement.

In the words of the IEPC theme: "Glory to God and Peace on Earth!"

Sanna Eriksson was a youth representative for Church of Sweden at the IEPC.

Adolescents in Uruguay Give a "Vaccination Dose" against Maltreatment

The awareness campaign "A Treatment for Good Treatment" ("Un trato por el buentrato") was started in 2003 in Uruguay and has since spread to Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, with the objective to promote respect for the rights of children and adolescents. It focuses particularly on their rights to participate in society, and on their maltreatment and sexual abuse.

The campaign has two components:

- a theoretical and practical training program dealing with non-violent conflict resolution, the transformation of violence, artistic techniques and the promotion of good treatment;
- a public awareness-raising campaign that involves being present on the streets, in the media, educational and religious centers and in parliament.

Participants comprise around 100 civil society organizations and groups committed to children and adolescents, including youth centers, state schools, private colleges, and churches and other faith communities.

An enthusiastic young woman leads the "March for Good Treatment" to the headquarters of the Uruguayan Institute for Adolescents and Children (INAU) in Montevideo. © Abby Anderson

Training

Each group chooses three delegates to attend the training sessions: one male adolescent, one female adolescent and one adult connected with them. They participate in the various forms of training, passing on what they have learned to their own constituencies.

In the first level, the campaign aims to raise awareness, stimulate commitment and mobilize adolescents to promote a culture of good treatment. The next goal is to influence the youth groups and institutions in which they participate.

Mr Nicolás Iglesias Schneider © Private

The campaign hopes to mobilize some 2,000 adolescents each year in Uruguay to conduct a symbolic "vaccination" in the course of a week with a "dose" of anti-violent action. The "vaccine" contains various ingredients: respect, love, gentleness and a sense of humor. It is symbolized by a honey sweet, which the adolescent gives to the adult who wishes to be vaccinated.

In the course of one week, the adolescent groups move into action. The goal is to vaccinate more than 60,000 Uruguayans every year in different settings such as city squares, stadia, colleges, grammar schools, rock concerts, buses and religious services.

With the vaccine, each adolescent hands over a certificate of vaccination, which contains an invitation to get involved and promote concrete activities of good treatment. The adults are also given a sticker and a sweet symbolizing the sweetness necessary in dealing with children and adolescents.

These activities are accompanied by various messages, announcements and interviews in the media including radio, television and newspapers. The authorities have expressed support for the campaign.

Volunteers

Organized by the CLAVES (keys) program of Youth for Christ in Uruguay, the campaign is free of charge for the participants and those vaccinated.

It involves a great deal of work by volunteers and relies on the support of various state, religious, public and private entitities. In Uruguay, this includes the Ministries of Education and Culture and the National Youth Institute. It is also supported by the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI), Church of Sweden, the Christian children's movement "Movimiento Cristiano Juntos por la niñez" and other organizations.

Nicolás Iglesias Schneider has worked as youth coordinator for CLAI. He was a volunteer for the Agape international ecumenical center, based in Turin, Italy.

Liturgical Material

Called to Walk Together

The following liturgical material comes with invitation to the churches to celebrate all that Christian churches have in common, and can therefore be used in an ecumenical service. In view of existing differences, there should be no celebration of Holy Communion held in conjunction with this liturgy.

Introduction

The service is designed to commemorate all that Christian churches have in common. It is important not to underline dogmatic differences between individual denominations. The focus is on what we can celebrate together as Christians on such a day. The theme is the common faith of all Christians in the one God, in Jesus Christ, his son, and the Holy Spirit, together with God's grace and unconditional acceptance of all Christians. The service intends to take up the constant transformation of the church emphasized by Martin Luther (*ecclesia semper reformanda*), and Christians' hope and wish for one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

Order of Service

Opening and Invocation

We are before you today, Lord, just as we are;
we come from different families,
with different occupations,
with different problems and also
with different hopes.
Thank you for letting us come
before your face,
the way you created us,
with our faith, be it great or small,
and for letting our doubts also find a place in
your house.

In a world in which nothing seems secure
anymore,
and the future is uncertain,
you have given us the promise, through your
Son Jesus Christ,
that you will always love us,
although we are as we are.

Lord, you lovingly call us your children and
we can call you Abba – Father.
Lord, may we never forget your love.

Today we are invited as your children
No longer to notice the differences
that separate us,
but together to celebrate
that which unites us:
faith in God, the Father,
and his Son, Jesus Christ,
and the Holy Spirit.

***Hymn:** Agape 73, Praise the God of all Creation*

Prayers of Penitence

God, we confess
That we do not always believe in your love for
us human beings.
We try to find our own happiness,
are concerned for our lives, our families and
our securities.
Let us hold on to your love and believe
That you are there for us, even in uncertain
times.

Congregation: Lord, forgive us.

Before you we must also confess
That we are not able to accept others for what
they are:
your beloved children of God.
Their nature and behavior are strange to us,
their life projects and beliefs deter us
from approaching them and accepting them
unconditionally.
We have even made life difficult for others,
and have hurt them with our words and actions.

Congregation: Lord, forgive us.

The dream of being one church of God
Is something we humans have not yet
managed to fulfill
through our own efforts.
We cannot overlook differences.
Send us your Holy Spirit,
who can reconcile, where there is wrongdoing,
who can unite, where there is division,
and who calls us to be brothers and sisters.

Congregation: Lord, forgive us.

Forgiveness

Almighty God is merciful to us
and does not make us accountable for our sins
for the sake of his son, Jesus Christ.

"(But) if anyone does sin,
we have an advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous;
and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins,
and not for ours only
but also for the sins of the whole world."
(1 Jn 2:1-2)

Psalm: Psalm prayer 103:1-4,8-13, expressing thanks for God's gift of grace and mercy.

Hymn: *Agape 99, Vaga vara den du i Kristus är*

Proclamation and Confession of Faith

Scriptural Readings:

Old Testament: Deut 6:4-9; Lev 19:18;
New Testament: Mk 12:30f, 1 Cor 12:12-27; Gal 3:26-28.

Sermon text: Phil 3:12-14

Creed

Here the Nicene-Constantinopolitan can be used, as the creed most widely recognized among Christians. Use of the form without the filioque *("and the Son") acknowledges Orthodox objection to the addition of these words. In some contexts, the Apostles' Creed may also be appropriate.*

Mission and Benediction

Instead of spoken intercessions, as is usual at this point in many Lutheran churches, there is to be a creative expression of what Christians believe and can share with one another. Four stations should be arranged in the church that the worshippers can visit. Ideally everyone should spend some time at all of them, or at least two, which he/she can personally select. The stations are stand-alone in terms of content and the activity may take approximately five minutes; it would be helpful to provide an acoustic signal to indicate a change. The motive for this creative activity at the stations is to emphasize fellowship in faith. Doing something differently than the other groups and yet being together in worship – that reflects fellowship among the churches.

The four stations illustrate what the Christian churches have in common, instead of their differences: together we can pray, bless, share bread with each other and come closer to the dream of someday being one church.

1. **Prayer**: This is a place to write intercessory prayers. Individual requests can be put down on paper and pinned up on a prayer wall provided. Then follows a time of quiet meditation together.

2. **Blessing**: The hymn *Agape 56, May the love of the Lord* is sung here together and will be heard at the other stations as a sung benediction. The hymn will be sung again at the end of the service before the spoken benediction.

3. **Sharing bread**: Since a joint communion is not yet ecumenically possible with all Christian denominations, sharing bread is seen as a symbol of hope. Here people will share bread with one another and eat it together.

4. **Dreaming and reforming**: This is a place to share dreams and particular wishes about the Christian churches and togetherness in faith. Drawings can be made of hopes and dreams or they can be expressed in writing, using bright colors.

Hymn: *Agape 106, Wij geloven een voor een*

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: *Agape 72, Porque el entro*

Before the Benediction is pronounced, the whole congregation sings the song of blessing, ***Agape 56 May the love of the Lord,*** *which has already been sung at one of the stations.*

Benediction

This liturgy was prepared by Rev. Theresa Haenle, Theological Assistant, LWF Department for Theology and Studies.

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