



Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

The LWF in 2018

For a just, peaceful and reconciled world

“With Passion for the Church and for the World”

The Council adopted a new LWF strategy in July. The *LWF Strategy 2019-2024* identifies two priorities:

- Supporting churches’ presence and vibrant witness in the world
- Promoting human dignity, justice, and peace

The strategy reflects the member churches’ commitment to express their communion relations by joining hands to work together on diaconal initiatives including action for climate justice, promote gender justice and youth inclusion, and support ecumenical dialogue, theological education and formation.

Its title is a reminder of the churches’ vocation for justice, peace and reconciliation in the world.



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

A growing communion of churches

The communion is growing. In 2018 three new members joined the LWF. With the addition of the Augustinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala, the United Evangelical Church in Cuba Lutheran Synod and Christ Lutheran Church in India, the LWF now has 148 member churches in 99 countries, representing more than 75.5 million people.

Humanitarian response and advocacy

In 2018, the LWF directly supported over 3 million refugees and internally displaced people. The rights-based approach in the communion's humanitarian response, ensures that marginalized people are empowered to claim their rights at local, national and international levels. The LWF engages with the United Nations (UN) through its partnership with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, contribution to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The UN has applauded LWF's innovative use of the UPR for "effectively mainstreaming refugee policy into human rights policies at the national level."

Lutheran identity, theological education and diakonia

Theological education is a fundamental feature of Lutheran identity and a foundational LWF commitment. The program for Theological Education and Formation focused on two areas: building the capacity of member churches to have leaders who can engage theologically with contextual challenges, and strengthening internal cohesion through activities that deepen understanding of Lutheran identity. Support to churches' holistic mission work in their different settings continues through the LWF Scholarship Program, which approved 74 new scholarships for study in fields related to theology or diakonia in 2018.

"Leaving no one behind"

Following its successful launch in October, LWF's "*Waking the Giant*" initiative continues to connect the long-standing diaconal work of churches and ecumenical partners to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Active in four pilot countries—Colombia, Liberia, Tanzania and the United States of America—its objective is to make both churches and the community of states and governments aware that together, they can achieve the Agenda 2030 goal of "leaving no one behind." Examples of other activities include the *Symbols of Hope* project, which is helping churches in Ethiopia and Nigeria to offer potential migrants information on human trafficking and home-based alternatives to the often perilous life abroad.

Gender justice and women's empowerment

A critical step in addressing gender justice and women's empowerment was follow-up on the roll out of the LWF *Gender Justice Policy*, now available in 24 languages. Regional member church events such as one in Medan, Indonesia, for Asia, provided space to reflect on practical ways of overcoming gender-based violence both at church and community levels. The Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region produced a publication on women doing theology, focusing on gender and diakonia, migration and patriarchy. Engagement continued with the CSW and CEDAW, which are critical platforms in ensuring UN guidelines on the rights of women and girls are accessible to member churches, country programs and ecumenical partners.

Youth engagement

On Reformation Day 2018, the Global Young Reformers' Network 2.0 program was launched, marking a new phase of working with young people in member churches by probing "What is it to be a Young Reformer?" The network infuses passion and creativity within the communion by actively encouraging youth to contribute their skills and gifts to Lutheran churches worldwide. Advocacy for climate justice continued in international and regional activities, with young people advocating on behalf of the LWF, for the poor and vulnerable globally.

Interfaith relations

The LWF and Islamic Relief Worldwide jointly published *A faith-sensitive approach in humanitarian response* guide, providing practical support to those involved in program planning for people in need. This resource draws attention to health promotion through local faith communities, referring people to religious actors for psychosocial or spiritual care, and involving faith leaders in eradicating harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriages.

Peace building

The LWF initiated programs for church leaders to train in conflict resolution and peace building, especially in view of growing tensions and polarization around the world and the collective failure to resolve conflicts. One such activity, the LWF International Seminar on Prevention, Conflict Management and Peace Building in São Leopoldo, Brazil, hosted 40 leaders from 21 churches in Africa, Asia, the three European regions, LAC and North America. The *LWF Peace Messengers Training* manual, designed for young people of different faiths, was distributed to the member churches.

Ecumenical relations

"To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical." The Council adopted LWF's *Commitments on the Ecumenical Way to Ecclesial Communion*, paving the way for deeper ecumenical engagement. The completion of the bilateral dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox churches and the trilateral dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church and the Mennonite World Conference were major milestones. A new model for Anglican-Lutheran relations was introduced, moving the two partners beyond classical dialogues and inviting practical engagement that promotes regional and national cooperation.

[Read more about the life and work of the LWF at lutheranworld.org](http://www.lutheranworld.org)

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