

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES – EINE KIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT – UNA COMUNIÓN DE IGLESIAS – UNE COMMUNION D'ÉGLISES
LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

Office of the General Secretary

To
LWF Member churches;
LWF National Committees
Recognized Congregations

20 June 2012

Re.: The LWF Council meeting in Bogotá, Colombia, June 2012

Dear sisters, dear brothers,

We write this letter to you upon return from the LWF Council meeting, held from June 15 to 20 June in Bogotá, Colombia. We were graciously hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO), which together with the LWF World Service in Colombia offered thorough preparation and warm hospitality throughout the Council meeting.

We were blessed by the exposure to the reality of the people and churches in Colombia. We felt encouraged by the steadfast vision for peace with justice and reconciliation that the people of this country have, despite an internal armed conflict that has lasted 50 years now and its dramatic consequences on the population: today around 5 million Colombians are internally displaced. As a communion of churches, we pledged ongoing accompaniment and support to our member church in Colombia, as well as our commitment to sustain the presence of LWF World Service in the country.

This letter comes to you in order to share with you insights of the conversations that the LWF Council held on the issues of family, marriage and sexuality. You may recall that in 2007, the LWF Council meeting at Lund, Sweden, encouraged LWF member churches to engage in respectful dialogue on these complex matters. It also suggested a time frame of 5 years for this discussion. These five years come to completion in 2012, which is the reason why the LWF Council in Bogotá reconnected to the conversation at the level of the global LWF communion. The “LWF Emmaus conversation,” as the Council decided to call this dialogue process, took place during the Council meeting with the intention to:

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- a) provide a space for careful listening, and
- b) to discern together about ways ahead in the journey of the LWF communion of churches.

Since the LWF Council did not hold this conversation for its own sake, but for the sake of the entire LWF communion of churches which it represents between Assemblies, we want to share with you the major insights that resulted from this conversation. They can be summarized as follows:

1. **Respectful and dignified dialogues on complex issues are possible:** The Emmaus conversation during the LWF Council in Bogotá was characterized by an atmosphere and attitude of deep respect for each other. It was possible for each Council member to express his/her opinion on these issues, as well as to listen with openness to what other Council members had to say. This atmosphere of trust and dignified engagement speaks well of the deep roots that the notion of communion has reached in the life of the LWF.
2. **The unique situation of each member church has to be acknowledged:** Member churches are all in their own way seeking to be faithful to Scriptures in their own distinct settings. During the group conversations at the Council it became evident once more that there are a series of factors that have strong impact on the way that the LWF member churches read Scriptures and relate to the issues of family, marriage and sexuality. Contextual realities such as legislation, public discourse, ecumenical and interfaith relationships, cultural identity all play an important role, as does the theological discourse of member churches and their different backgrounds. Hence, each member church has to be approached in its uniqueness. Generalizations and simplified approaches are not advisable on these complex matters.
3. **The LWF is a communion with many themes:** There was a clear insight expressed during the Council meeting that the issues of family, marriage and sexuality should not be dealt with as communion-defining issues. The LWF communion of churches is not a monothematic communion. It is a communion with many themes, many commitments and a vast variety of engagements that need to be sustained and projected into the future. Ongoing conversations on these particular matters should not undermine our vocation to be committed to holistic mission, encompassing proclamation, diakonia and advocacy. We continue to uphold in service and accompaniment the poor and the marginalized of this world.
4. **The LWF communion as a whole should not take action on issues of family, marriage and sexuality:** Council members expressed the strong advice that the LWF Communion of churches should avoid taking action on these issues, but rather keep the dialogue open as member churches continue dealing with these complex matters as they witness in their respective contexts.
5. **The LWF journey as a communion of churches continues:** In light of the above-mentioned insights and perspectives, the LWF Council reaffirmed the vision

expressed in the LWF Strategy to be “a communion in Christ, liberated by God’s grace, living and working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world.”

In the attachment to this letter you will find a chronological compilation of key official LWF discussions and decisions on family, marriage and sexuality since 1995 (Council Exhibit 10.4). It provides a good overview of the flow of discussions and conversations until now.

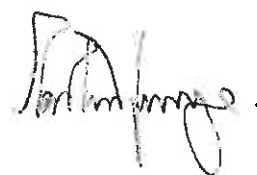
We hope that this information is helpful in understanding our ongoing journey as a communion of churches.

We wish you all the inspiration for ongoing witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in your contexts. May God bless your words and service so that God’s compassion and God’s love for justice, peace and reconciliation may speak powerfully to the people.

In Christ,



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Munib Younan
President of the LWF



The Rev. Martin Junge
General Secretary of the LWF

Attachment: Council Exhibit 10.4

