



ONE BODY  
ONE SPIRIT  
ONE HOPE

THIRTEENTH ASSEMBLY  
THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION  
2023 • KRAKÓW, POLAND

# FROM WINDHOEK TO KRAKÓW 2017-2023 SIX-YEAR REPORT



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LWF Thirteenth Assembly  
Kraków, Poland  
13-19 September 2023



THIRTEENTH ASSEMBLY  
THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION  
2023 • KRAKÓW, POLAND

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# OUR JOURNEY FROM WINDHOEK TO KRAKÓW

**The journey of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) from the Twelfth Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia, to the Thirteenth Assembly in Kraków, Poland, has been eventful.**

The global communion has continued its strong witness in the world, focusing on supporting the witness and work of member churches and promoting human dignity, justice, and peace.

As you prepare for the Thirteenth Assembly, this report will give insights into that work, showing how we strengthened communion relations, worked for unity, engaged in theology together, spoke out for justice, empowered churches, built the leadership skills of women, and youth, and of lay and ordained people, with passion for the church, and how we worked to support people in need.

I am deeply grateful for the staff who have implemented this work, to those leading the work in the Communion Office and to the thousands implementing work in the field programs. I am also grateful for the commitment of the many funding partners of the LWF, who year over year show their strong commitment to our partnership and collaboration. Last, but not least, I am grateful for the LWF member churches across the whole world, that remain as committed now as they were 76 years ago, to being Lutheran churches in communion, liberated by God's grace and called by Christ to live and work together for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world.

*Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt  
General Secretary*



Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt.  
Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The LWF is a global communion of 150 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 77 million Christians in 99 countries.**

The Thirteenth Assembly gathers in 2023 as the LWF looks back on its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which was celebrated with several activities throughout 2022. The vision of the LWF at its founding in 1947 has remained constant: we strive to put our Christian faith into action through shared witness and dialogue, advocacy, humanitarian and development work. Indeed, the assembly theme, “One Body, One Spirit, One Hope,” reminds us of our shared gift and task of being churches in communion.

In Kraków, Poland, we gather to celebrate our common journey and diversity, and discern together the role of the LWF as a central catalyst for ongoing efforts to be faithful stewards of the gospel in changing times. The entire communion gathers as the member churches and all our major partners are establishing “a new normal” following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its attendant global financial crisis.

Our work over the last six years started on the threshold of commemorating 500 years of the Reformation, which helped us to redefine our common purpose, sense of direction and encouragement to be a communion in ongoing renewal. The new *LWF Strategy 2019–2024 – With Passion for the Church and for the World*, which builds on the previous strategy, has been the compass for all our activities. Its two strategic priorities: “Supporting churches’ presence and vibrant witness in the world” and “Promoting human dignity, justice and peace” provide the overall framework of being churches in ongoing need of reformation.

LWF’s member churches have continued to explore what it means to be a communion from a Lutheran perspective and how the communion lives not for itself but to serve


and witness in the world. By intentionally accompanying the churches in their witness and work, the Communion Office (CO) has placed emphasis on strengthening awareness of being part of a global communion and the invaluable contribution of each member’s rich knowledge and experience.

Building on the incentive of the Reformation anniversary, we have strengthened ecumenical dialogue with other church bodies and cooperation with other faith traditions. Continued conversations, prayer and study with our Roman Catholic, Mennonite, Pentecostal, Anglican, Orthodox, Reformed and Methodist church partners has nurtured our commitment to engage together on doctrinal issues, move closer to each other and share in joint witness to our Christian faith. In order to support churches’ role as peace makers, the LWF organized several trainings to develop their capacities to engage in conversations with other faiths and contribute to mutual understanding and trust at community, national and global levels.

It has been a period of revitalizing various networks, strengthening leadership training, and supporting projects and initiatives that enable member churches to respond to the needs of local communities and strengthen public witness. LWF worked with the churches to bring their voices and experiences to national, regional and global spaces, addressing topics such as forceful displacement, violent conflicts, the climate crisis, gender justice, the role of women and youth in church leadership, and holding stakeholders accountable for achieving the United Nations (UN) agenda for sustainable development.

Theological discernment with participation of experts from all LWF regions was an integral part of the work, focusing especially on Lutheran identities, public theology, eco-theology, women in the ordained ministry as well as theological education. LWF’s



A photograph of a church service in Bogotá, Colombia. The image is taken from the back of a person in the foreground, looking towards the front of the church. The person in the foreground has their hands raised in a gesture of worship. The church is filled with people, many of whom also have their hands raised. The lighting is warm and focused on the front of the church, where a pulpit and altar are visible. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the people in the foreground.

“Liberated by God’s grace, a communion in Christ living and working together for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world.”  
— *LWF Vision Statement*

Bogotá, Colombia, worship in the Church of San Lucas, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

commitment to keep together its holistic mission work through proclamation, diakonia, and advocacy led to the creation of a new Department for Theology, Mission and Justice (DTMJ). The subsequent establishment of the Action for Justice unit has enhanced a more strategic engagement with the member churches and country programs in our local and global advocacy work.

Through the member church projects, LWF has continued to support churches in serving the neighbor by providing hands-on solutions to pressing needs in the congregations and wider community. Priorities identified by the churches include theological training, advocacy for human rights, health service delivery, livelihood initiatives, and women's and youth empowerment, which LWF supports through long-term projects and short-term projects including the COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund.

Throughout the past six years, the churches voice has been heard on local, regional, and global platforms defending marginalized and vulnerable people and supporting initiatives to address the climate crisis. Young people have played a pivotal role by taking leadership in global advocacy as mandated by the Twelfth LWF Assembly as well as setting up local projects to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis.

The Lutheran communion's affirmation of women's full inclusion in the ordained ministry has been consistent since the 1984 Assembly and approximately 90 percent of LWF's member churches ordain women today. However recognition of their leadership roles across the communion remains a challenge. We highlight many milestones in this journey in a year that marks the tenth anniversary of the *Gender Justice Policy*, and acknowledge that more work is required to address gender injustice. Programs such as the Hélène Ralivao Fund, which offers scholarships to candidates from Africa or post-graduate studies and short-term training in research on the intersection between theology, gender justice and leadership, go a long way in promoting women's leadership in church and society.

LWF's international humanitarian response and development arm has lived up to its reputation as one of the largest faith-based humanitarian actors in the world. Our timely, compassionate, and professional humanitarian response, and presence in hard-to-reach areas continues to shine the spotlight on the most vulnerable people. With the number of displaced people globally exceeding 100 million, our collaboration with key UN bodies such as the High Commissioner for Refugees and local governments remains critical.

Amid new crises such as the war in Ukraine, protracted conflicts and political instability in several countries including the Central African Republic, Colombia, Ethiopia, Haiti and Myanmar, LWF positions its work in nearly 30 countries around the world to care for refugees, internally displaced people and host communities, and other populations at risk. By focusing on three key programmatic areas: livelihoods, quality services, and protection and social cohesion, we seek to build resilient and empowered communities that take responsibility for their own sustainable development. Our rights-based local to global and back to local (L2GL) approach ensures that strategic engagement with UN bodies such as the Human Rights Council avails to local communities mechanisms that hold governments accountable for improving human rights situations on the ground.

The period since the 2017 Assembly has been marked by major transitions. In addition to the CO restructuring, the LWF elected a new General Secretary, and enhanced the new ways of online collaboration that came into place during the COVID-19 pandemic. New policies have been established to comply with global standards for codes of conduct, and safeguarding and protection of staff, incentive-based workers and volunteers, and members of the communities we serve.

One of LWF's strengths is the commitment and generous contributions from the funding partners and the CO's accountable stewardship of the financial contributions. However, financial sustainability in the long term is a key goal that must include diversifying our income sources. An example is the recent

establishment of the Stiftung Olivenzweig (Olive Branch Foundation) in Switzerland, to facilitate fundraising in the host country of our Geneva headquarters to support our global activities.

As the Assembly meets to provide direction for the next phase of LWF's work, we are convinced that the CO has the capacity and strong potential to take up new challenges. Gathered in one body as the Lutheran communion, may the stories presented in this report inspire a spirit of unity to build a future with hope for all the people we are called to serve.



# A COMMUNION IN CHRIST: WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

**As members of Lutheran churches, we come together in communion, living and working together for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world.**

Relationship building and action have been interwoven in the fabric of the LWF since its founding 76 years ago. In the aftermath of the Second World War in 1947, Lutheran churches around the world felt compelled to come together to confess, reflect and reconcile, and to respond together to human suffering. World War II had just ended and countries in Europe were dealing with the fallout of war, antisemitism, warring ideologies, and huge numbers of unemployed, wounded, and dispossessed people. The four foundational pillars of the LWF: joint efforts in theology, common initiatives in mission, working for Christian unity, and rescue for people in need, guided the LWF then and continue to offer guidance today for our joint witness to the gospel and service to the neighbor.

These commitments have brought the LWF member churches closer together. Since its foundation, the LWF has been instrumental in connecting Lutheran churches to one another. The contexts in which our member churches live and work, vary to a great degree: some are majority churches, other minority; some have a long history, others are recently founded; some witness in highly secularized countries, others in highly religious countries where Christians can be a majority or minority. Each of these churches will deal with different issues depending on its context. Our global communion brings these different perspectives together, so we can learn from one another.

At the same time, what unites LWF member churches is more important than what makes them different from one another. This is the faith in Jesus Christ, who should always be at the center of what we teach about God. When it comes to serving the neighbour and giving

credible witness as churches, words and deeds go together: we walk the talk.

Lutheran theology is the basis on which the communion was built and continues to evolve.


“The Lutheran World Federation confesses the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only source and norm of its doctrine, life and service,” states the second article of LWF’s constitution. “It sees in the three Ecumenical Creeds and in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, especially in the unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism of Martin Luther, a pure exposition of the Word of God.”

Being a confessional communion means that the LWF stands fast on the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone, which is the core of the Lutheran confessional writings. Lutherans confess that Christ himself is at work in us through faith and in the presence of the Holy Spirit. With Jesus Christ being at the center of what we teach about God and how we do this, we proclaim that God’s liberating grace makes human beings truly free. Through being freed from being turned into themselves, they are free to turn their eyes from themselves to God and the neighbour.

The Lutheran confessions teach that faith is always active in love, in service to all neighbors. Reflection on our roots in the Reformation and our role in a changing world supports and informs all aspects of the work undertaken by member churches through the LWF.

In the spirit of the Reformation, the communion is ever reforming and will continue to evolve in response to theological insights, diaconal engagement, mutual learning, joint advocacy, and the leadership of young people and women, while being strongly rooted in prayerful discernment.





“In the LWF there is no church which is so rich, so old in history and well-endowed with resources that it would not depend on others, and there is no church so new, with such scarce resources that it wouldn’t have something to offer others.”  
– *Former LWF President, Bishop Josiah Kibira, Tanzania*

Opening worship of the Europe Pre-Assembly, in Oxford, United Kingdom. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



## WHAT DOES BEING A “COMMUNION” MEAN?

Our communion is a worldwide network of Lutheran churches. We hear the gospel of God’s grace, receive baptism, and join in Holy Communion, and in doing so are drawn into communion with God and with one another. We become the Body of Christ.

The evolution of the LWF from a federation to a strongly connected communion of churches has happened over time. Today it has 150 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 77.5 million Christians in 99 countries.

While our churches are autonomous, they are called by God into a shared journey marked

by deep solidarity and a sense of mutual accountability to the communion.

Responding to God’s call, LWF member churches live and work together. This interaction makes the LWF much more than just an organization. In so many ways member churches come into a deeper ecclesial relationship with one another.

We take part in God’s holistic mission by sharing the good news of God’s love. Inspired by this love, we put our faith into action, working for the empowerment and liberation of people who are marginalized and in need. We advocate for justice in all areas of life—economic, social, and ecological—and lift up the God-given dignity of each and every human being.



**Dedication of the Lund cross in the Chapel of the Ecumenical Center, Geneva, 2018. Photo: LWF/S. Gallay**

The Lutheran World Federation is a communion of churches, which confess the triune God, agree on the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship. The Lutheran World Federation confesses the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church and is resolved to serve Christian unity throughout the world.

**The Lutheran World Federation:**

- furthers the united witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and strengthens the member churches in carrying out the missionary command and in their efforts towards Christian unity worldwide;

- furthers worldwide among the member churches diaconic action, alleviation of human need, promotion of peace and human rights, social and economic justice, care for God's creation and sharing of resources;
- furthers through cooperative study the self-understanding and the communion of member churches and helps them to act jointly in common tasks.

– *LWF Constitution, Article III*

We bring our spiritual and material resources together for common witness and service in the world. We come to a greater understanding of our mutual need for one another as members of the Body of Christ. We learn more deeply about the need for solidarity, and the necessity of interdependency.

The Assembly has authority over the LWF constitution.

The Assembly elects the LWF President and members of the Council, which governs the organization between assemblies. At its annual meetings, the Council deliberates on specific recommendations of its committees on the direction of LWF's program work.

## STRUCTURE AND RELATIONSHIPS

LWF's member churches are spread across the communion's seven regions: Africa, Asia, Central Eastern Europe, Central Western Europe, Nordic Countries, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America.

The membership of the LWF has grown since 2017. There is continued growth of membership in the global South and an ongoing decrease in church membership in the global North, with some exceptions.

The highest governing body is the Assembly, held every six to seven years with participants from all the member churches. Assembly delegates give general direction to the work of the LWF and nourish the life of the communion together through worship and sharing experiences, joys, and challenges.

The Executive Committee convenes twice a year to handle matters delegated by the Council. It is made up of the Council's chief officers—the President, seven Vice-Presidents representing the LWF regions, the chairpersons of the Finance Committee and Committee for World Service, and the other Council committees, and up to two additional members. The Executive Committee is elected by the Council, aside from the President who is elected by the Assembly. It also serves as the Personnel Committee and appoints Directors of the Communion Office departments. The CO, with headquarters in Geneva, carries out LWF's work as mandated by the Assembly and Council and guided by the LWF strategy.

The General Secretary heads the CO as the chief executive officer and the chief ecumenical officer and leads the organization's work which is carried out by the Office of the General Secretary, the Department for Theology, Mission, and Justice, the Department for World Service (DWS or World

# THE LUTHERAN WORLD

150 Member Churches

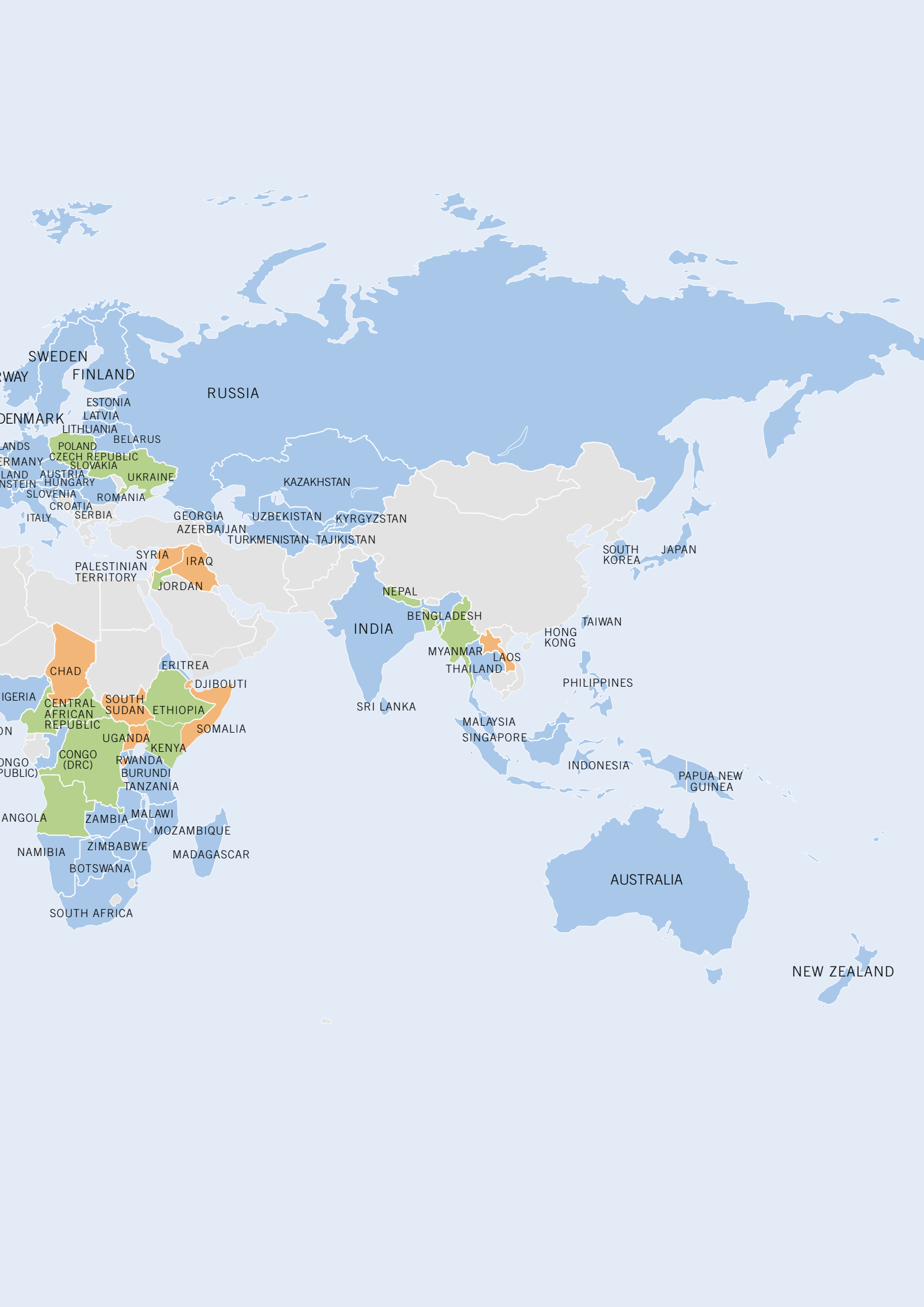
7 Regions

26 Countries, LWF World Service active operations

- Countries with one or more LWF member churches
- Countries where LWF World Service works
- Countries with LWF member church and LWF World Service operation







SWEDEN

FINLAND

RUSSIA

ESTONIA

LATVIA

LITHUANIA

BELARUS

POLAND

CZECH REPUBLIC

SLOVAKIA

AUSTRIA

HUNGARY

UKRAINE

SLOVENIA

ROMANIA

ITALY

CROATIA

SERBIA

GEORGIA

AZERBAIJAN

KAZAKHSTAN

UZBEKISTAN

KYRGYZSTAN

TURKMENISTAN

TAJIKISTAN

SOUTH KOREA

JAPAN

SYRIA

IRAQ

JORDAN

PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

NEPAL

INDIA

BENGLADESH

MYANMAR

THAILAND

LAOS

HONG KONG

TAIWAN

PHILIPPINES

SRI LANKA

MALAYSIA

SINGAPORE

INDONESIA

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

CHAD

ERITREA

DJIBOUTI

SOUTH SUDAN

ETHIOPIA

SOMALIA

IGERIA

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

UGANDA

KENYA

CONGO (DRC)

RWANDA

BURUNDI

TANZANIA

ANGOLA

ZAMBIA

MALAWI

MOZAMBIQUE

NAMIBIA

ZIMBABWE

MADAGASCAR

BOTSWANA

SOUTH AFRICA

AUSTRALIA

NEW ZEALAND

REGION	2017	2023
<b>Africa</b>	31 churches, with 26 million members	31 churches, with 28 million members
<b>Asia</b>	54 churches with 11.4 million members	55 churches with 12.4 million members
<b>Central Eastern Europe</b>	16 churches with just over 1.2 million members	18 churches with 1.1 million members
<b>Central Western Europe</b>	19 churches with 14.7 million members	19 churches with 13.4 million members
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	17 churches with just over 764,000 members	19 churches with over 755,000 members
<b>Nordic Countries</b>	6 churches with just over 18.8 million members	6 churches with just over 18 million members
<b>North America</b>	2 churches with 3.7 million members	2 churches with 3.6 million members
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>145 churches, 75.6 million members</b>	<b>150 churches, 77.5 million members</b>

Service), and the Department for Planning and Coordination. The General Secretary reports to the LWF Council.

The CO staff coordinate work in LWF’s regions through structures that respond to the needs and capacities of each, such as global and regional networks and country programs. The LWF maintains relationships and partnerships with its related organizations and partners around the world, with other Christian bodies, other faiths, civil society, and state and international actors such as the United Nations.

In line with LWF’s strategy for 2019–2024: *With Passion for the Church and for the World*, a restructuring of the CO in 2020 led to the creation of a new Department for Theology, Mission, and Justice, to better coordinate implementation of LWF’s engagement with its member churches in programs that have shared objectives. The planning and coordination functions were also reorganized to fall under one department. (For more information, see chapter 5)

## WHO DOES WHAT IN THE COMMUNION OFFICE?

The LWF CO is made up of staff who work from the Geneva office and several other countries across the world. From 2020, increased use of online technology has facilitated exchange among staff members working in different locations and with governance groups as well as with member churches and others involved in LWF’s work.

The CO carries out LWF’s work as mandated by the Assembly and the Council. It serves the member churches and works together with them as well as related agencies, theological institutions, ecumenical and other partners.

## THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

The Office of the General Secretary has primary responsibility for nurturing communion relations and promoting Christian unity. The work focuses on strengthening relationships with member churches in the seven regions and connecting local concerns with global initiatives. This involves different encounters to encourage churches to share in mutual learning and support one another. Promoting ecumenical relations through conversations on overcoming historical differences and working toward unity with other Christian World Communions is a priority for the LWF and its member churches. Together with our ecumenical partners, we promote theological dialogue, shared worship, and joint service to those in need.

## DEPARTMENT FOR PLANNING AND COORDINATION

The Department for Planning and Coordination (DPC) takes the lead for LWF's strategic aim of building organizational sustainability, accountability, and effectiveness. The main focus areas are to coordinate the implementation of the LWF strategy by ensuring effective and timely planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting across the entire organization. The department also manages LWF's finance and income development, human resources, the archives, and information technology (IT) services. The communication unit ensures effective internal and external communication and tells the story of the communion in ways that inform and move our audiences to action.

## DEPARTMENT FOR THEOLOGY, MISSION, AND JUSTICE

The Department for Theology, Mission, and Justice coordinates four programs. Three

of them—Theology for Transformation; Leadership and Institutional Development; and Diakonia—are directly linked to the strategic priority of supporting the presence and witness of member churches locally, regionally, and globally. The fourth program, Action for Justice, is primarily linked to the second strategic priority of promoting human dignity, justice, and peace, in collaboration with World Service. The leadership and empowerment of women and youth is a special priority area, which connects to different aspects of our work.

## DEPARTMENT FOR WORLD SERVICE

The Department for World Service coordinates work in support of the strategic priority of promoting human dignity, justice, and peace. Its work responds to humanitarian emergencies and supports people in need through country and emergency programs, currently in 26 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe. It focuses on three programmatic areas: livelihoods, protection and social cohesion, and quality services.

## GLOBAL STAFF STATISTICS

- **Geneva Communion Office: 90**
- **International staff: 60**
- **National staff: 2,539**
- **Incentive workers and volunteers: 5,197**
- **Male: 55%**
- **Female: 45%**

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

- **1 Assembly, highest decision-making body**
- **1 Council**
- **1 President**
- **7 Vice-Presidents, representing the seven LWF regions**
- **General Secretary conducts the business of the LWF and is responsible to the Council**
- **Communion Office carries out work mandated by the Assembly and Council**
  - **Office of the General Secretary**
  - **Department for Theology, Mission, and Justice**
  - **Department for World Service**
  - **Department for Planning and Coordination**

# LWF STRATEGY

## 2019–2024

The LWF is committed to ensuring organizational sustainability and effectiveness. A key tool for creating a solid basis for strategic management is the creation of regularly renewed strategy to guide the work of the global communion for a fixed period of time.

The current strategy was approved by Council in 2018 and covers the period 2019–2024. Through the strategy, the LWF responds to how member churches understand their participation in a global communion. The strategy is based on the LWF vision statement, “Liberated by God’s grace, a communion in Christ, living and working together for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world”.

The current strategy, *With Passion for the Church and for the World*, articulates the communion’s priorities for years 2019–2024 and guides the work of the LWF Communion Office. As such it is an important tool for informing stakeholders of the direction set for the LWF.

The strategy allows Council and CO staff to make strategic management choices that align resources in the interest of meeting set objectives. The strategy guides the development of annual work plans and the effective allocation of resources to deliver the expected results.

The strategy is informed by deliberations and discussions at the Twelfth Assembly of the LWF in Windhoek and articulates what LWF member churches understand as their common calling as a communion of churches. It recognizes that they are engaged both locally and globally in witness and service. Similarly, the resolutions and deliberations at the Thirteenth Assembly in Kraków will give direction to the next LWF strategy.

The priorities and objectives articulated in the strategic plan for 2019–2024 are to:

- Support churches’ presence and vibrant witness in the world

- Jointly develop theological reflection that articulates our understanding of being Lutheran churches in communion
- Live out the communion relationships among member churches
- Work together to further God’s holistic mission
- Ensure promotion of gender justice at every level
- Ensure the meaningful participation of youth in church and society
- Engage ecumenical partners and build relationships to respond to the call to unity and joint witness
- Engage in interfaith dialogue and cooperation to build mutual understanding and promote collaboration
- Promote human dignity, justice and peace
- Respond to people in emergency situations, with a focus on refugees, returnees, internally displaced people, their host communities, and communities at risk
- Support local communities in sustainable development efforts to achieve life with dignity and full enjoyment of their rights.
- Equip member churches to engage in diaconal action
- Collaborate with ecumenical partners, interfaith actors, and religious leaders on issues of human dignity, justice, and peace
- Strengthen efforts for climate justice
- Strengthen local and global advocacy to promote human rights and protect the rights of marginalized communities

The overarching framework for all this work is “the calling of LWF member churches to live and work together as a communion of churches in ongoing need of reformation.”



# THE TIMES IN WHICH WE LIVE AND WORK

**Since the Twelfth Assembly in Windhoek, the LWF and its member churches have dealt with a range of challenging issues. These include conflicts in all regions of the world, rising numbers of refugees and internally displaced people, increasingly serious effects of climate change, the impact of rapid development of communication technologies, and growing challenges to the global frameworks and mechanisms, including the human rights framework. A characteristic across all areas is that the pace of change has been much faster than predicted.**

The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 profoundly affected the lives of people in all countries of the world, while also exacerbating many of the challenges facing the LWF and its member churches. The pandemic exposed the glaring inequalities between those who were able to access health care, vaccines, or online communication and those who lost lives, livelihoods, and hope during lockdown. Strict quarantines also provoked so-called shadow pandemics of increased gender-based violence and mental health crises, particularly among young people.

Prior to the outbreak of the global pandemic, there was renewed hope that international consensus around the UN's 2030 agenda would lead to improved living standards through the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the same time, however, rising inequality caused by a widespread economic crisis, increasing numbers of refugees and displaced people, plus a shrinking space for civil society in almost all parts of the world continued to cause mounting concern.

Since the early 2000s, rising nationalism and fundamentalist ideologies have continued to create polarization and exclusionary politics, which also threaten to tear apart religious communities. The rapid pace of digitalization,

the proliferation of 'fake news' and the rise of artificial intelligence have made it harder, but ever more important, for church leaders to communicate an alternative message of inclusion and solidarity with those on the margins of society, and to act as messengers of peace and reconciliation.

## FAR-REACHING EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Since the last Assembly in 2017, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly been the most visible and most unexpected crisis which the LWF and its member churches have responded to. Governments around the world struggled to grasp the global impact of the virus, with some better equipped than others to respond in a timely way to save lives. The pandemic exposed existing inequalities, both between countries with resources to mitigate the economic impact of the lockdowns, and within nations where the most marginalized communities were always hardest hit by the loss of lives and livelihoods. During the lockdowns, there was also a sharp rise in violence against women and children who were confined to their homes and unable to access support networks.

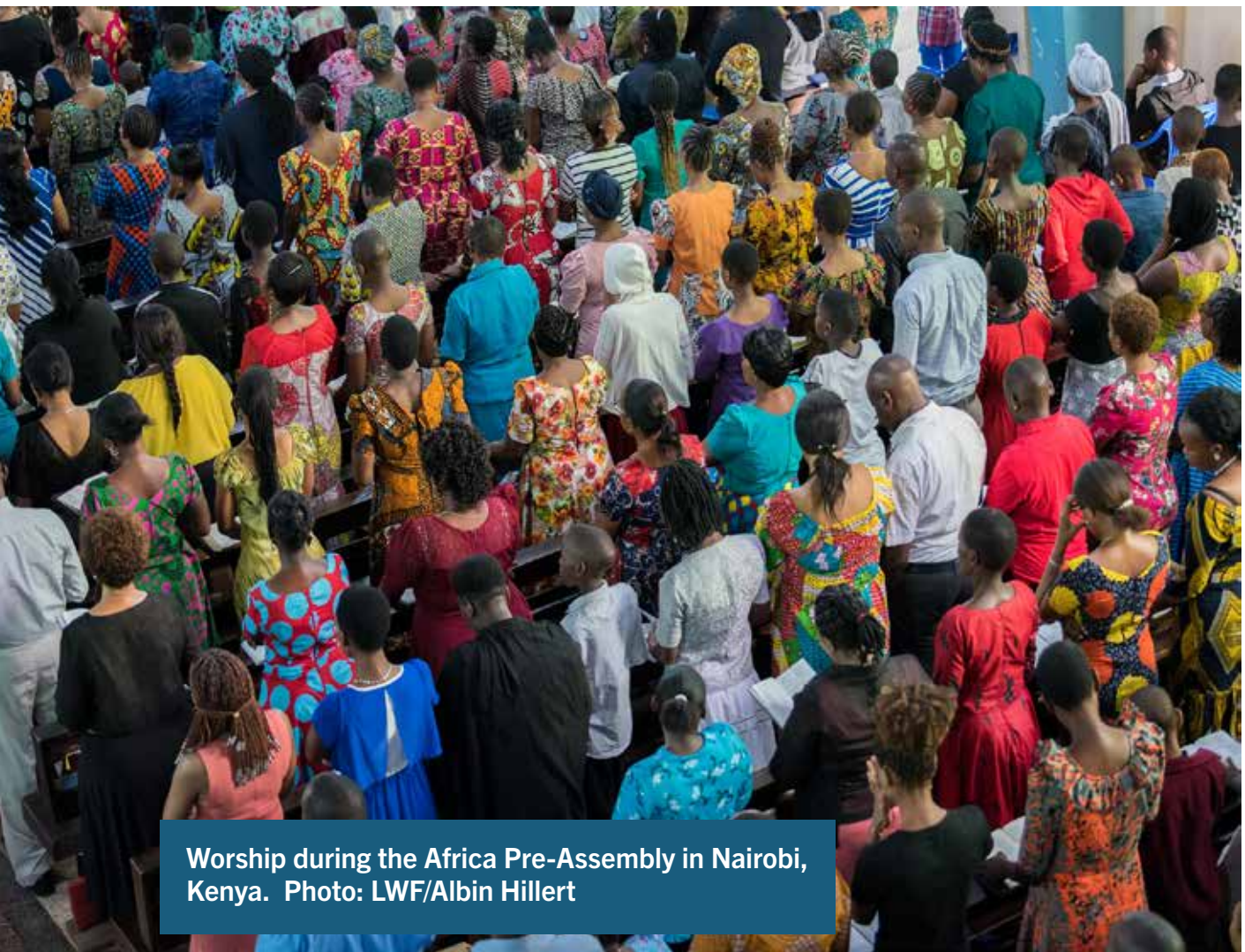
On a more positive note, the pandemic highlighted the resilience and adaptability of communities and organizations facing overnight changes in ways of working, worshipping or simply keeping people in touch with each other. Young people played a leading role in the deployment of ways to communicate, as well as supporting older and more vulnerable members of their communities. But the pandemic also exacerbated a growing mental health crisis, especially among younger people already suffering various challenges, including anxiety





Ms Khin Myint Myint sews face masks in Tan Gyi village in Sittwe Township, Myanmar.  
Photo: LWF/Nu Nu Aye





**Worship during the Africa Pre-Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert**

over unemployment, lack of social contact, lack of housing, fear of climate change.

The global economic crisis deepened as a result of the pandemic, with poverty and inequality continuing to grow, hampering hard-won gains toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Conflicts and wars, from Ukraine to Myanmar, from Haiti to Sudan and Ethiopia also challenged the international community, causing millions to flee in search of safety. In 2022, the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees announced that the number of forcibly displaced people had surpassed 100 million for the first time in history.

Existing human rights and other legal frameworks that have shaped our understanding of the world order, have continued to come under pressure from

governments using fear to escalate tensions and suffocate civil society space. Populist leaders increasingly sought to exploit religious and ethnic beliefs to advance their exclusionary nationalist agendas and to spread fear. Mistrust of "Western" motives, whether related to international relations, foreign trade, or human rights, was used to affirm identity politics and discriminatory policies in other parts of the globe.

## SHIFTING RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHICS

Within the religious landscape, demographics continued to shift fast from global north to south, alongside a decline of institutional religion in some parts of the world, and a



rapid rise of evangelical and charismatic communities. While many people still identified with a need for spiritual nourishment, a growing number expressed disillusion and disassociation with traditional religious organizations. Declining numbers within mainline churches, particularly in Western countries, highlighted a need for greater ecumenical convergence at theological, pastoral and practical levels. As churches returned to in-person services in the wake of the pandemic, many struggled to persuade people to return to their congregations and resume engagement with the life of their communities.

Mistrust of institutions, coupled with a growing influence of fake news and conspiracy theories, led to a manipulation of theology and a distortion of biblical principles by religious actors. Technologically savvy, neo-conservative influencers offered simplistic responses to questions about complex ethical issues. Growing rifts over questions of human sexuality divided believers within their own faith communities, rather than across denominational lines. The need for strengthening theological education, as well as providing spaces for listening, learning and critical thinking across diverse communities became increasingly urgent.


On the positive side, there was a growing realization within the secular world of the need to work more closely together with faith-based organizations. The pandemic and subsequent lockdowns highlighted the ability of churches and other faith groups to reach and effectively support the most marginalized communities, underlining their importance as vital partners in humanitarian emergencies, as well as for longer-term development work.

There was also a growing recognition of the value of interfaith dialogue and cooperation, particularly in the work of promoting justice, peace and reconciliation. The pandemic highlighted many examples of people from different faith communities showing solidarity and working closely together to support their neighbors in need.

## WITNESSING TO 'ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT, ONE HOPE'

Within this challenging global context, the theme of the LWF Assembly in Kraków, *One Body, One Spirit, One Hope*, takes on a particular significance and new urgency. In our globalized, yet increasingly fragmented world, where injustice and discrimination cause immense suffering to people and the planet, the church is called to embody a vision of unity, bearing witness to God's love for every person, regardless of cultures, ethnicities, religion, gender or economic status. Where nationalist leaders promote hatred, fear and exclusion, churches are called to live out the gospel values of dialogue, love and inclusion, showcasing ways of transcending boundaries within families, communities and nations.

“The world is in urgent need of hearing the gospel of justification, God’s act of grace that liberates us to love our neighbors and all that God has made. We are called into this adventure of living the gospel ever anew in our many contexts. We are called into this ministry together as a communion of churches, called forth into the world as one body, with one Spirit, and one hope.”  
— *Thirteenth Assembly Study Guide*



“We are passionate about the churches holistically witnessing to Christ in their contexts. We seek to equip and resource each other to witness to the liberating grace of God.”  
– *LWF Strategy 2019-2024*

The Fourth LWF Assembly was held in 1963 in Helsinki, Finland, under the theme “Christ Today.” Photo: LWF Archives

# BEING CHURCHES IN COMMUNION

**As a worldwide communion of churches in the Lutheran tradition, we gather as people from a wide range of cultures and traditions, and we celebrate the strength of our diversity. When we gather, we share in the rich expressions of our faith which are rooted in the Bible and nourished by the soil of our cultural contexts. Together we learn new ways of speaking to address both the gifts and the challenges of our times.**

In 2017, the Twelfth Assembly of the LWF called for “the LWF communion [to] become a central catalyst to the core concerns of church leaders and synods in their ongoing efforts to be faithful stewards of the gospel in changing times” and “to create platforms for contextual deliberations, exchange and learning for churches facing change.” (*Resolution on strategic priorities and church revival*).

In response to this resolution, the LWF strategy for 2019–2024 named “being churches in communion” as an essential focus for the period. Consultations, seminars, workshops, and webinars have provided opportunities for member churches to explore what it means to be a communion from a Lutheran perspective and how the communion lives not only for itself but to serve and witness in the world.

Representatives of member churches in every region—lay and ordained, women, men, and youth—have gathered to learn about each other and to hear about the diversity of contexts in which they live, work, and witness. They have shared stories of the challenges they face due to growing inequality; pressure on human rights frameworks: increasing violence, conflict, and instability; rising nationalism, fundamentalism, populism, and racism; and accelerating climate change.

Through meeting to share common concerns, member churches have gained insights from each other about how to address such concerns and drawn strength from knowing they are part of a global community that is rich in knowledge and experience.

The LWF has been intentional in accompanying churches in their witness and work through visits by the General Secretary and regional secretaries which contribute to strengthening the communion. The accompaniment of regional secretaries further encourages and equips member churches for open and respectful exchanges in local, regional, and global gatherings. This has included holding each other mutually accountable when differing theological perspectives – influenced by their evolving home contexts – have the potential to create tensions in the communion. The LWF also encourages exchange visits among churches themselves to share best practices, discuss challenges they face in their ministries, and experience worship life in congregations. Due to COVID-19, in-person visits to member churches were interrupted for nearly three years but online engagement increased substantially.

As a communion, we have strengthened our understanding of other Christian traditions through ongoing work on ecumenical dialogue and cooperation. Together with Roman Catholic, Mennonite, Pentecostal, Anglican, Orthodox, Reformed and Methodist church representatives we have prayed, studied, and nurtured our continuing commitment to engage together with doctrinal issues in order to come closer to each other and to witness jointly to our faith. In the past few years, we have marked ecumenical milestones and continued to work on creating understanding and respect among all Christians.

When the COVID-19 pandemic created significant challenges to member churches, the LWF was able to respond rapidly by making theological and spiritual resources available and accompanying churches online.

The experience of meeting online will have a long-term impact on how member churches interact and will enhance LWF’s ability to be present in practical ways to support members of the communion.

# 2017

May: Twelfth Assembly elects new LWF President Archbishop Dr Panti Filibus Musa (Nigeria) and Council.

July: Lutheran–Roman Catholic Commission on Unity marks 50 years of Lutheran-Catholic dialogue.

July: World Communion of Reformed Churches signs association agreement to the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.

December: Launch of Hymns of Advent: A Singing Communion series of daily videos on social media.

November: Bishops and Presidents from 12 countries attend Retreat of Newly Elected Leaders (RoNEL).

September: LWF joins Ecumenical Prayer for Creation in Assisi to inaugurate annual Season of Creation.

July: Lutheran–Roman Catholic Commission on Unity finalizes “Baptism and Growth in Communion” report.

# 2019

May: Theological education a major topic at Africa Lutheran Church Leadership Consultation in Tanzania.

May: LWF member churches in LAC and North America meet in Peru to discuss their mission work.

September: International Lutheran-Pentecostal Dialogue Commission meets in Madagascar.

November: Launch of “Being Lutheran” monthly webinar series to explore Lutheran identities.

November: Annual church leadership gatherings for Africa, Asia, Europe and LAC are held online.

September: “Being church in times of transformation,” theme of online European Church Leadership Consultation.

June: LWF Executive Committee approves Thirteenth Assembly theme, “One Body, One Spirit, One Hope.”

# 2021

June: Online church leadership gatherings for Africa, Asia, Americas, Central Eastern Europe and Nordic region.

June: Diaconal collaboration affirmed by LWF Vice-Presidents, Pope Francis and Caritas Internationalis.

June: Estonian theologian Rev. Anne Burghardt is elected as the next LWF General Secretary on 19 June.

On Reformation Day, LWF announces a Communion Solidarity Fund, and invites churches to contribute.

June: Council welcomes the German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine as a new LWF member church.

June: Launch of photo exhibition to mark LWF’s 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, during first post-pandemic Council meeting.

May: “Ministry after the storm” is the theme of Asia Church Leadership Conference, in Thailand.

# 2023

March–June: Pre-Assemblies take place in Europe (UK), Americas (Colombia), Africa (Kenya), and Asia (Malaysia).

June: Council welcomes the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Georgia as a new LWF member church.

June: Sixth International Seminar for Lay Leaders is held in Geneva and Wittenberg, the first in-person since COVID-19.

September: Lutheran Communion in Central and Western Africa Summit includes Reformation anniversary service.	October: LWF and Catholic Church leaders receive Anglican Communion's affirmation of the JDDJ.	November: Lutherans and Orthodox discuss "Legacy of the Reformation" at Joint Commission plenary.	November: "Asia Communion at the Crossroads: Discerning Our Journey Together," theme of regional gathering.
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May: The Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) and North America Leadership Conference in Argentina, discusses how to deepen theological understanding.	May: Lutheran Council in Africa discusses strengthening relationships regionally and globally.	January: The Lund Cross is placed the Chapel of the Ecumenical Center in Geneva.
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# 2018

October: LWF and the PCPCU produce joint liturgy for prayer to mark JDDJ's 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary.	October: Representatives of member churches attend the Asia Church Leadership Conference in Indonesia.	October: Launch of global study of Lutheran identities at consultation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.	October: Lutheran identity among topics at Central Eastern Europe Church Leadership Consultation.
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May: General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge announces decision to step down effective 31 October 2021.	February: The General Secretary leads an LWF delegation to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe.	January: Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, announces the Harding Meyer Prize in Ecumenism.
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# 2020

June: The 4 <sup>th</sup> LWF International Seminar for Lay Persons in Church Leadership is held online.	October: Lutheran pastors join Strasbourg institute online course "To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical."	November: First face-to-face meeting of the Assembly Planning Committee is held in Kraków.	November: On 1 November Rev. Anne Burghardt takes office as General Secretary. She is installed on 17 November.
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May: "I breathe upon you the breath of life" is theme of Leadership Conference of the Americas, in Chile.	April: Beginning of LWF's events to mark 500 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther's translation of the New Testament.	March: Online prayer for Ukraine is held on Ash Wednesday, 2 March.
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# 2022

September: Global Pre-Assemblies for Youth, Women, and for the first time Men, precede the Assembly in Kraków.	13-19 September: Over 800 participants gather for LWF's Thirteenth Assembly in Kraków, Poland.
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## EXPRESSIONS OF THE COMMUNION – EXPANDING AND FLOURISHING

*We are passionate about the churches holistically witnessing to Christ in their contexts. We seek to equip and resource each other to witness to the liberating grace of God. The challenges that churches face are of a varying nature, given their specific contexts. By engaging in dialogue and collaboration, we strengthen and nurture each other. (LWF Strategy 2019–2024)*

The LWF is deeply committed to nurturing a strong sense among member churches of being in communion with each other. Engaging in theological reflection that articulates a shared understanding of being Lutheran churches is at the heart of that commitment.

The past six years have seen an intensified interest among member churches in exploring the gifts and challenges of being united in communion. Encounters among church leaders and theologians for shared theological discernment have deepened understanding and provided a meeting ground for facilitating understanding across communion.

This meeting is “very important for the consolidation of our communion.” It gives churches “the opportunity to share our experiences, our frustrations and our testimonies of the grace of God in our lives for mutual support.”

– Rev. Dr Jeanette Ada Maina,  
LWF Vice-President for Africa, at  
the 2022 regional consultation

## RECOGNIZING SHARED LUTHERAN IDENTITY

Regional church leadership gatherings continued to play an important role in the life of the communion by bringing church leaders – men, women, and young people – together to recognize and celebrate the gifts of being connected through the LWF. As Lutherans from each region met, they shared experiences, learned from each other, and heard about the communion’s global concerns and how those impact the local context.

The question of the theological identity of LWF member churches ran through all these discussions. By learning and exploring the diverse contexts in which member churches witness and by engaging in deep reflection on Lutheran theology, churches had the opportunity to recognize each other as members of the communion.

At the Asia Church Leadership Conference held in Manila, Philippines in late 2017, delegates deliberated the need for stronger Lutheran identity among churches, while also affirming holistic mission that combines proclamation, diakonia, and advocacy. They expressed concern about ministerial formation, and the impact of religious fundamentalism in the region. The 2019 meeting in Indonesia under the theme “Pursuing peace through interfaith dialogue” called on churches to work together with other faith communities to promote gender justice, environmental protection, and care for the poor.

When the Lutheran Council in Africa met in Accra, Ghana in 2018, strengthening collaboration and relationships on the continent and globally and forging unity was the main focus as reflected in the theme, “And all the members of the body, though many, are one body.” The 2019 gathering of the Africa Lutheran Church Leadership Consultation in Moshi, Tanzania, deliberated on the mission of the church and its prophetic voice and the implications for theological education.



The gathering of the European regions—Central Eastern Europe, Central Western Europe, and Nordic countries—in Slovenia at the end of 2018 discussed implementation of the LWF strategy. Theological education, communion building, and strengthening Lutheran identity were seen to be key to responding to the impact of refugees and migrants across Europe and to the rise of populism and secularization.

At their meeting in May 2019, church leaders from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and North America (NA) issued a joint message pledging to strengthen regional cooperation through LAC networks and that the two LWF member churches in NA would participate in the annual regional leadership conference, renamed the Leadership Conference of the Americas. Discussion focused on the LWF strategy for 2019–2024.

After a phase of online gatherings due to COVID-19, the series of in-person regional church leadership meetings resumed in 2022. The Asia Church Leadership Conference was held in Bangkok in May 2022, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand. Its theme, “Ministry after the storm,” was apt for leaders from the region to listen and discern together how to support one another after the storm of the pandemic.

In the same month in Santiago, the two LWF member churches in Chile hosted the Leadership Conference of the Americas. Delegates from Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America met under the theme “I breathe the breath of life upon you,” emphasizing resurgence from the crisis. The large participation was noticeable despite the serious travel restrictions that still prevailed. Lutheran Church in Chile Bishop Alexis Salgado



**Bishop Alexis Salgado (left) of the Lutheran Church in Chile and Bishop Izani Bruch (right), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile, during the 2022 Leadership Conference of the Americas in Santiago. Photo: LWF/Eugenio Albrecht**



**Prayer for peace at the 2019 Asia Church Leadership Conference. Photo: LWF/Rev. Melina Agustina**

said the theme was relevant for “all of us who are concerned about the post pandemic situation, all those who feel discouraged, afflicted, without a way out, and I speak to those of us who have been called to speak the Word. We too need to be shepherded, counseled and lifted up.”

In June, delegates to the Africa Lutheran Church Leadership Consultation met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. They discussed the need to strengthen the theological identity of churches in the region, recognize misleading theologies and increase the bold engagement of churches in the public space for the sake of peace and justice.

At the Central Western Europe Church Leadership Consultation in Eisenach, Germany, in October, delegates discussed the common opportunities and challenges among LWF’s

churches in the region. “It is the mission of the churches to contribute to society perceptibly and credibly through our faith that gives us strength, hope and orientation,” said Pröbstin Astrid Kleist, LWF Vice-President for Central Western Europe. During the meeting, a celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the German National Committee of the LWF took place in the historical Wartburg Castle.

The Central Eastern Europe meeting took place the same month in Bratislava, Slovak Republic. Key topics included the war in Ukraine and the related regional refugee crisis, declining church attendance exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing challenge of finding common ground among minority churches with different historical, theological and linguistic traditions. All leadership consultations in 2022 were attended by the General Secretary for whom these gatherings offered a good



opportunity to connect with church leaders in different regions.

## LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER AND HOW WE WORK TOGETHER

Living out the communion relationship among member churches

The LWF engages in communion strengthening work by facilitating between member churches exchanges of learning and best practices for theological formation, diaconal service, and engaging in the public space. These exchanges take place at in-person and online events which bring together lay and ordained men, women, and youth. These are further reinforced through publications, toolkits, news stories and videos shared through LWF's website and social media platforms.

Through the program "Learning Through Exchange of Leaders" exchange visits took place between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary and the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN) in 2018. In the eastern area of Yola, the Hungarians witnessed how health delivery services through the Wakka Community Health Program help families living in settlements. Visiting Budapest, Nigerians participated in Sunday worship and learned about local diakonia. This visit has led to a cooperation agreement between the two churches signed in June 2023. In 2021, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) signed a joint initiative to enhance learning and experience sharing following a seminar hosted by the ELCT in Arusha. The same year, the Nordic region held a number of webinars on "Baptism in times of change" for LWF's member churches in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

In 2022, LWF supported a meeting with the LWF National Committee in Indonesia (LWF-NKI) at which all the 13 member churches in

the country were represented. As eight of the 12 bishops who participated had been elected during the pandemic, the meeting offered an opportunity to foster relationships with one another, and to deepen their understanding of the vision and mission of the LWF communion.

Mutual relations between ordained and lay church leaders from different regions are further supported through platforms such as the annual Retreat for Newly Elected Leaders (RoNEL) and Lay Leaders Seminars. (For more information, see chapter 4.2)

## COVID-19 – DELIVERING SERVICES AND SUPPORT IN A CRISIS

In March 2020, countries imposed lockdowns to stop the spread of the new coronavirus, COVID-19. That period of restricted social connection and interruption in church life showed the importance of being linked through a worldwide communion and demonstrated LWF's ability to adapt to an unprecedented global emergency.

In facing the challenge of the pandemic, the communion showed it is a community that functions well when faced with difficult circumstances. Procedures for online decision-making and resource sharing were created in record time. New systems were developed to make remote work possible, and an online meeting culture evolved quickly. The LWF established online networks and used them to convene online gatherings for information sharing, connection, and prayer.

The Communion Office staff worked fully from home during the lockdown and have since then continued to work partly from home office. A COVID-19 Task Force met on a regular basis to update regulations in compliance with suggestions from Swiss authorities. Guidelines were developed for global and regional LWF-organized meetings, including meetings of the Executive Committee and Council.

In his report to the Council in 2021, General Secretary Junge noted that in spite of the pandemic, support from LWF's collaboration continued to function well on many levels, including advocacy, strategic engagement with various UN bodies, gender, working with churches on emergency preparedness and humanitarian response, resolving issues and providing assistance in many country contexts, developing capacity building and fundraising initiatives together. The Finance Committee Chairperson Oberkirchenrat Olaf Johannes Mergeler reiterated this message in his report to the Council. "Even in these difficult times, LWF has succeeded in ensuring economic and financial stability at all times. Through close cooperation between the governing bodies of the LWF and the Communion Office in Geneva, it was possible to respond quickly and efficiently to the current challenges," he said.

## BEING CHURCH IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

While it was impossible to meet in person, holding meetings, seminars, and events online made it possible for more people to participate. But it also meant that many others, who did not have access to modern technology, could not be included. Churches did their best to respond to their members' needs.

The European region met online in 2020 under the theme "Being church in times of transformation." A key aim was to foster communion and awareness of belonging to a bigger whole, a timely reminder of the strength and support of being part of a global network of churches.

The African region also met online that year and explored a similar theme "Being church in challenging times." The participants included coordinators of the regional networks for women, youth, communication, theologians, and diaconal practitioners.

The Asia region opted for a series of "fellowship gatherings" for prayer, mutual support, and respite from the demands of leading churches during a pandemic. This enabled the participation

of more church leaders and strengthened connections across the communion.

Among the LAC churches, frequent online meetings were held with the aim of providing space for mutual support to church leaders. The churches in the region agreed to establish protocols on being more caring and open churches, and alternative ways of staying connected to congregation members. "Sensitize (educate in a practical way) churches on regulations related to the pandemic and issues against violence," was the theme of their first online meeting. In June 2021, the first online Conference of the Americas took place under the theme: "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility."

The pandemic created a situation in which churches were asked: what form does community take? How do the decisions made today concerning virtual or hybrid worship impact that way we will be an embodied community in the near future?

## IMPACT ON MEMBER CHURCHES

COVID-19 had a huge impact on Lutheran churches throughout the communion and affected churches in all regions. The statistics were overwhelming. By the end of November 2020, there were more than 10 million COVID-19 cases. At online meetings church leaders from the LWF regions met to share challenges and lessons learned in raising awareness, supporting church members and addressing the challenges from the pandemic. Response to violence in reaction to pandemic-related restrictions was part of the discussions. This made it possible for member churches to learn from each other during a challenging time and offer prayer support.

As COVID-19 restrictions continued into 2021, the LWF intensified its accompaniment of member churches. Online meetings with individual heads of churches and others in leadership continued while at the same time the communion began offering counseling,



**Bishop Emmanuel Murjee of the Diocese of Kajo-Keji, South Sudan, during an LWF-coordinated ecumenical road drive campaign in early 2022. The road drives were used to raise awareness among South Sudanese refugees about reducing COVID-19 transmission in camps and settlements. Photo: LWF/K. Logi**

shared prayers, liturgy, scripture messages, and letters of encouragement.

In a joint pastoral letter, LWF President Musa and General Secretary Junge called upon “LWF member churches to oppose and reject any singling out of individuals or blaming groups as being responsible for COVID-19. This is a time to stand together and to support each other. The world does not need stigmatization and violence, it needs cooperation and solidarity.”

Resources were offered to reflect on the meaning of online worship and how to approach sacramental life during the lockdown. Rev. Prof. Dr Dirk Lange, LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, said in his reflection on “Digital

Worship and Sacramental Life in a Time of Pandemic” in regard to longing for physical gathering and sharing the sacraments: “ In times of pandemic, God assures us that we have been given, not a spirit of timidity but rather “a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.” (2 Tim 1:7). We are invited into the spiritual disciple of restraint. Our yearning—our communal yearning—marks and nurtures a growing communion within the faith community. This yearning is a new spiritual reality for many of us. It is also an ancient one within the communion of saints.”

The online pastoral visits were moments to offer LWF’s accompaniment to churches that were facing other far-reaching crises. For instance, in Asia, the regional secretary ‘visited’ the



four member churches in Myanmar when the country was in turmoil due to the military coup in February 2021. It was a meaningful time of sharing and praying together, and also a demonstration of LWF's solidarity with our suffering members in Myanmar.

The LWF President and General Secretary joined Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in a call for a worldwide prayer of believers of all religions on 14 May 2020. In a joint statement the leaders said: "The world needs unity and solidarity across borders to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to humble prayer and supplication to God, our faiths inspire us to persevere in supporting one another, health workers, and scientists who are working tirelessly for medical solutions."

## RAPID RESPONSE FUND

The situation was particularly challenging for churches which did not have the technical means to worship online and to receive donations by electronic transfer. This dramatically reduced the funds available to pastors and lay people for providing community outreach and support at a time when these were urgently needed.

At that critical moment, donor partners and member churches began contacting the LWF Communion Office in Geneva to offer financial support for pandemic-related projects. In early April 2020, the LWF established its COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund (RRF), which became an instrument to express solidarity in tangible ways over the next two years. World Service



**The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela (IELV) offered livelihood recovery kits during the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo: IELV**

also established a Rapid Response Fund, with a similar purpose for its Country Programs.

The RRF, with contributions from LWF member churches and related agencies, supported the many LWF member churches that were particularly vulnerable. Successful applicants received a grant of up to EUR 5,000 for immediate relief activities such as distribution of food packages, medical assistance, and hygiene kits.

Between April 2020 when the fund was set up and early December 2022, over EUR 1.3 million had been disbursed to 90 LWF member churches, resulting in 199 projects implemented in 57 countries around the world.

The success of the fund showed the benefits of being part of a global communion equipped to redistribute resources in response to sudden need.

For example, thanks to financial support from the fund, the Protestant Christian Batak Church in Indonesia started a fish-farming project to promote food security for families affected by the economic backlash of COVID-19. The activities involved youth and women groups from the Christian and Muslim communities. In Cameroon, a COVID-19 awareness campaign by the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon included distribution of hand-washing kits to parishes, churches and church offices, mosques, and other public places. The project reached more than 50,000 people of different faiths and backgrounds and also served as a strong testimony of interreligious solidarity and ecumenical cooperation.

In Guatemala, the Augustinian Lutheran Church took up a 12-day mission of delivering food to remote villages that had been on a three-month, self-imposed quarantine and curfew to avoid contracting Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). More than 360 families received over 31,700 kilograms of food and sanitation supplies.

In March 2021, LWF shifted its short-term emergency funding framework—initially created in response to COVID-19—to focus on recovery and livelihood projects. At the same

time, it increased the amount that churches could request from EUR 5,000 to EUR 10,000 per project. The objective was to address the long-lasting social and economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic on churches and the communities they serve.

## COUNTRY PROGRAMS ADAPT AND RESPOND

The effect of the pandemic on World Service country programs was significant. Existing crises continued, but challenges grew, and programs needed to include a pandemic appropriate response in their action. Often this required increasing or redirecting activities. For refugees and internally displaced people, pandemic restrictions only compounded their already existing isolation in refugee or settlement camps. Prices for fuel, materials, and food increased dramatically. The impact on the poor was severe with loss of income and reduced access to food and medical assistance.

Staff in all locations stepped up to meet the challenge. Their experience and reputation helped them navigate the challenges. Governmental relations with field staff mattered. The LWF was able to rapidly procure water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) kits and to raise awareness of the need to respect preventive measures.

Through a special task force to coordinate response to the pandemic, each country set up a contingency plan for the potential impact of the pandemic on the overall work in the short term and in the long-term. As part of a global effort, almost half a million people in 22 countries received support through the World Service COVID-19 Response Fund. The fund was used to train staff and teachers, raise awareness in communities, improve water and sanitation, and distribute soap, masks, and other protective equipment. In Colombia for example, LWF responded to the most critical challenges: lack of food, water, health care and personal protective equipment (PPE). In Nepal the focus was on transmitting COVID-19 awareness information through short

text messages and radio broadcasts in local languages.

“We feel so happy to know that others are thinking about us and are concerned about our safety at this difficult time.” Ms Phatima Hemrum, chairperson of an LWF-supported saving and credit group in Morang district, Nepal.

In Za’atari and Zarqa refugee camps in Jordan, LWF staff provided psychosocial activities for children through online meetings and chat groups, with volunteers even teaching Zumba dance classes to children who were confined at home.

In 2020, as lockdowns left more and more people without income, LWF distributed food parcels and supported home-based livelihood activities. In education projects, study materials were made available to keep students engaged as more schools closed down. In addition, nearly EUR 5 million was designated to the COVID-19 response through budget reallocations and grant supplements. At the same time, awareness raising continued about the long-term effects of the pandemic, with occasions such as World Refugee Day focusing on lockdown effects on those who lost their homes. On International Day of the Girl Child, LWF highlighted the alarming increase in teen pregnancy, early marriage, and gender-based violence, while featuring girls determined to continue their education. Mental health became an important topic on World Humanitarian Day.

The effects of the prolonged impact of the pandemic was particularly felt in 2021 as the disruption of economic systems hit the poor people the hardest. LWF put more emphasis on additional livelihoods’ support to the most vulnerable people. For example, in Duhok, Iraq, a group of women and girls from Zawita sub-district who trained in sewing gained new sources of income. In the same region, LWF trained over 100 farmers to use new farming technologies to boost agricultural production. In Hamdanya, Sinjar and Mosul districts, LWF in partnership with its local partners distributed farming equipment, 10 greenhouses with drip irrigation systems along with seeds, fertilizers

and pesticides, and seed capital to 35 micro, small and medium enterprises.

“The pandemic has undone the resilience of the refugees and vulnerable host communities. Their savings diminish as they try to counter the effects of the pandemic, while their earnings decline due to market restrictions.” Philbert Habonimana, LWF Country Representative in Cameroon

LWF together with ecumenical and civil society partners engaged in inter- national advocacy on protection of the most vulnerable communities from the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing mainly on vaccine equity.

The effects of the pandemic continued after the lifting of restrictions. In February 2023, LWF launched a new report, *No One Is Safe Until Everyone Is Safe*. General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt introduced the report at a launch event in New York, hosted by the Lutheran Office for World Community.

“The sad reality is that not everybody is safe. There are still millions of people who do not have access to vaccines, accurate information or support,” said Burghardt.

The report explores the impact and the responses of churches and partners to the COVID-19 pandemic and concludes with recommendations for policy makers, donors, churches, and other faith actors who are working to build back from the devastating effects of the pandemic.

The study found that religious organizations played a unique role in countering misinformation. Examples cited by participants at the launch included faith leaders getting vaccinated publicly and speaking about hygiene and the causes and effects of the pandemic.

Among the significant changes that the pandemic lockdowns necessitated for faith-based organizations such as the LWF was an increased localization of activities, with a corresponding increase in trust between program executives and local partners on the ground.





Hand washing at the Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya. Photo: LWF/Pauline Kwamboka

## LWF LAUNCHES A COMMUNION SOLIDARITY FUND

Interactions with the member churches over the past years have revealed that the traditional long-term projects and funding mechanisms were unsuitable for responding to immediate and urgent needs. Following an increasing number of member church requests for support to respond to emergencies, the idea of establishing a Communion Solidarity Fund (CSF) was first suggested in 2019. Launched at the end of 2022, it has turned out to be an important instrument of solidarity in difficult times. In the coming years the CSF will build on the strength LWF has established in its projects' work to address the many other urgent needs requiring a rapid, short-term response due to unforeseen developments such as conflicts, natural disasters, public health concerns or other emergencies affecting LWF member churches and their wider communities.

## ACCOMPANYING CHURCHES IN THEIR HOME CONTEXTS

Both the LWF President and the two General Secretaries who served during this period accompanied by regional leaders such as Vice-Presidents and members of the LWF Council met with member churches in person and online throughout the six-year period.

In 2017, the General Secretary visited the Lutheran Church in Australia which includes the Lutheran Church in New Zealand. During his visit Rev. Dr Junge expressed appreciation for the church's ministry among Aborigenes and the way it practices "welcoming the stranger."

The visits were often prompted by urgent situations facing member churches in the region. In January 2018, LWF President

Archbishop Dr Panti Filibus Musa visited member churches in Myanmar where the LWF is implementing humanitarian and development work.

During a visit to Nepal in 2019 to mark the celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nepal Evangelical Lutheran Church, the General Secretary had the occasion to see the work of World Service and development projects run by the church. "As Christians, we are called to serve, and while it seems some other organizations may now be leaving Damak after the closing of the resettlement program, the LWF is committed to staying, to seeing this process through," Junge said when he visited a camp hosting Bhutanese refugee.

When the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe was facing prolonged drought and difficulty, Rev. Dr Junge led a delegation to the country to stand in solidarity with the church in early 2020. A week after the delegation returned, COVID-19 lockdowns were imposed in Switzerland and around the world.

In 2022 LWF President Musa visited Germany, Hungary, and Iceland, where he met with church leaders. Speaking at the Arctic Circle Conference in Reykjavík, Iceland, he said: "As people of faith, we have a unique understanding and appreciation of nature and creation. We know that we are called to live in harmony with creation and not to abuse, misuse or exhaust it. We believe that creation is a gift from God and that we are called to be good stewards, protecting the earth and its precious resources for our children and grandchildren."

From 2021 to 2022 General Secretary Burghardt visited five church leadership conferences in Africa, Asia, Central Eastern Europe, Central Western Europe, and the Americas. She also visited member churches in Poland, the Netherlands, Tanzania, and the country program in Uganda. In Uganda, General Secretary Burghardt met with several people living in LWF-supported settlements and camps. She spoke to teenage mothers living in the camps and listened to their concerns. "To see these girls increasingly being denied their right to a childhood and instead become mothers themselves is heartbreaking,"



## SUPPORTING THE LOCAL MISSION AND WITNESS OF CHURCHES

**Regional secretaries facilitate communion relations, accompany the member churches in each region, and coordinate their participation in events at the national, regional, and global levels. In addition, they support churches in conflict mediation, peacebuilding, crisis management, and pastoral care. Their presence in the region and knowledge of the diverse contexts of the churches is invaluable to effective mission and witness by local congregations and regional church-related entities.**

she said. “Their stories are difficult to listen to, but we must hear them, because the problem is real and right before us. We need to see how we can take a holistic approach in supporting these girls, preventing teenage pregnancies in the future,” she added.

In her address to the May 2022 Leadership Conference of the Americas General Secretary Burghardt spoke of the importance of communal involvement in God’s mission in the world. “In communion, we learn how to transform our anxieties into action. In communion, the Spirit empowers us to be a messenger of hope, particularly in situations that seem hopeless,” she said.

Member churches reach out to each other through the communion in various ways. In 2022, the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland (ECACP) initiated a cycle of prayers for LWF member churches as they prepare for the Thirteenth Assembly in Kraków, Poland. As a result, the first intercessory calendar for LWF member churches has been created. ECACP parishes are praying for each of the member churches of the LWF.

“We want to connect our local parishes with other LWF member churches and the global Lutheran communion,” says Anna Wrzesińska,

Chairperson of the Local Assembly Planning Committee.

## COMMITTED TO CHRISTIAN UNITY

The commemoration of 500 years of Reformation that marked the beginning of our journey from Windhoek to Kraków, took place in an ecumenical spirit. This spirit was also echoed and amplified in the ever-expanding acceptance and adoption of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ). In July 2017, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) signed an association agreement to the JDDJ in Wittenberg, Germany. The “Wittenberg Witness” is a statement affirming the common call to continued renewal and cooperation. The Anglican Consultative Council had affirmed the JDDJ in 2016. A worship was held at the Westminster Abbey on 31 October 2017 to celebrate the Anglicans’ decision to associate with the JDDJ. In March 2019, the five world communions who have signed the JDDJ met for a consultation at Notre Dame University in the USA. This consultation which brought together Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Anglicans, and Reformed ecumenical leaders, produced the *Notre Dame Consultation Statement* which affirms the commitment to the JDDJ and the urgent need to translate the message of justification in ways it can be understood today.

The year 2019 also saw the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the JDDJ. In the context of the LWF Council meeting in June, this ecumenical milestone was celebrated at an ecumenical prayer service in the Cathedral St Pierre in Geneva with LWF, Catholic, Methodist, Anglican and Reformed leaders lifting up that which “unites us rather than what divides us.” A special edition of the JDDJ was published in the four official languages of the LWF and in Italian.



**Ecumenical worship service during the Notre Dame consultation in 2019. Photo: Peter Ringenberg/University of Notre Dame**

## COMMITMENTS ON THE WAY TO ECCLESIAL UNITY

In 2018, the LWF Council approved the *LWF Commitments on the Ecumenical Way to Ecclesial Communion*. The document offers theological reflections about ecumenism from a Lutheran perspective. It contains six commitments with each of them including a strong self-commitment to ecumenism as well as suggestions for practical application. The commitments express a need to work for unity locally and globally, through a holistic approach to ecumenism, which includes theological dialogues, diaconal witness, advocacy, and shared spiritual life. Unity is always a gift and a task, and these ecumenical commitments remind that the aim of Christian unity is not just doctrinal unity but also unity in service and prayer.

This text has guided the ecumenical work of the LWF, notably the commitment to reception and implementation of consensus statements. It is important to ensure that joint declarations and consensus statements are put into practice on the local level.

## ONGOING DIALOGUES

Bilateral dialogues with other global Christian World Communions have also been ongoing, despite many challenges posed by COVID-19.

The Fifth Phase of the dialogue carried out by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission (2010-2018), which had already produced *From Conflict to Communion*, concluded its work in 2018 with the Report *Baptism and Growth in Communion*. The LWF Council studied and

received it in 2019. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU now the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity – DPCU) and the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith expressed concerns and described the report as “an open-ended study document not yet ready for reception.” A joint Preamble was written mentioning this fact but also noting that the Report “includes important pneumatological impulses for ongoing theological and ecclesiological discussion. It makes a significant step in proposing a differentiating consensus on baptism.” The LWF and the PCPCU published the report on their respective websites in 2022. Translations are ongoing into the LWF’s official languages.

During the years since the Twelfth Assembly in Windhoek, the LWF was received twice at the Vatican by Pope Francis. In an audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican in December 2017, LWF President Musa expressed gratitude for the Pope’s ecumenical support as well as his hope that: “the gift of unity among believers takes root and blossoms not as a result of human projects but by the grace of God.” In June 2021, Archbishop Musa, along with the General Secretary Junge and the LWF Vice-Presidents, met Pope Francis again and shared a gift of pottery from the Community of Taizé made with enamel produced from earth coming from refugee camps which are managed by World Service. Pope Francis encouraged the delegation to continue the ecumenical journey: “Let us continue, then, with passion on our journey from conflict to communion. The next stage will seek to explore the close bonds uniting Church, ministry and the Eucharist.”

During the meeting in Rome in June 2021, a common vision was also discussed and agreed upon between World Service and Caritas Internationalis, the social and justice arm of the Catholic Church. This statement builds on and consolidates the Declaration of Intent signed in Malmö, Sweden in 2016 during the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation. The common vision states, “In the projects that are implemented by Caritas Internationalis and World Service, our actions are not simply goal-oriented. They witness to gospel hope, liberated by grace, establishing justice and peace, providing the poorest with a sense of

basic trust in life.” This collaboration is further explored in chapter 4.3 below.

In 2017, the trilateral commission consisting of the LWF, Mennonite World Council, and the Roman Catholic Church, also concluded their work with the Report, *Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church*. It has been published in four languages. The Report summarizes the rich discussions that have taken place on the fundamental themes of the relation of baptism to sin and grace, celebration of baptism and the communication of grace and faith in the context of the Christian community and living out baptism in Christian discipleship. This important text also challenges the three partners to deepen their baptismal teaching and spirituality.

The first phase of official dialogue between the LWF and the Pentecostal World Fellowship concluded in 2022 with the Dialogue Statement: *The Spirit of the Lord Is Upon Me*. It was received and recommended by the LWF Council in June 2023 and is in the process of being prepared for publication.

“The dialogue commission strongly recommended the initiation of a second dialogue phase that could focus on worship practices and Christian formation in Lutheran and Pentecostal churches,” General Secretary Burghardt noted in her report to the Council.

Reception is “a constant and continuing process. Even churches which already enjoy ecclesial communion with one another are constantly called upon by God to make existing communion more visible, to strive for closer cooperation, stronger witness, and, wherever possible, to carry out their mission together.”  
— *LWF Ecumenical Commitments*

The official conversations between Lutherans and Pentecostals are intended to increase understanding between the two partners and they engage a new methodology of dialogue that includes case studies and shared contextual explorations. Annual meetings were held in the Philippines, Germany, Chile, Madagascar, online during the pandemic, and then finally in 2022, in person again, in Pasadena, California, USA.

The 17<sup>th</sup> Plenary of the International Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Theological Commission took place in Finland at the second half of 2017 and discussed the theme, “Legacy of the Reformation – Lutheran and Orthodox approaches”. The meeting finalized a statement on ordained ministry/priesthood. The 18<sup>th</sup> Plenary of the Joint Theological Commission took place in 2019 in Tirana, Albania hosted by the Orthodox Church. It discussed the theme “Holy Spirit in Church and World, “exploring the acts of the Holy Spirit through the lens of the Creed and the liturgical dimension of the invocation of the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*), as well as the work of the Holy Spirit in creation. The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue was celebrated at the 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary in Wittenberg, Germany, in the spring of 2023. The Commission aims at issuing a statement for 2025 on the occasion of the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Nicea. Work continues with the World Communion of Reformed Churches strengthening and implementing the *Wittenberg Witness*, “to dream a different world, a world where justice, peace and reconciliation prevail” (*Wittenberg Witness* §20).

Relations with the Anglican Communion continue to strengthen. In 2018 the LWF Council mandated the Anglican Lutheran International Commission on Unity and Mission (ALICUM) to work on the implementation and reception of the many dialogue consensus reports and full communion agreements that have been developed by the LWF and the Anglican Communion. Its first in-person meeting took place in 2023 in Costa Rica. This work will be crucial in finding new ways forward for mission and witness.

Continued exploration has taken place with the Salvation Army. A meeting at the headquarters of the Salvation Army in London 2022 revealed that the best area of cooperation lies with our joint humanitarian work. New forms of ecumenical collaboration were also discovered on topics of concern for both the LWF and the Salvation Army.

## MULTILATERAL ECUMENICAL ENGAGEMENT

After the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rate of in-person ecumenical gatherings, meetings, and dialogues increased significantly. The Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, Prof. Dr Dirk Lange, has been engaged in the Global Christian Forum (GCF), supporting the preparations for a global ecumenical gathering in Accra, Ghana in 2024. The GCF brings together many newer denominations or denominations that are not usually involved in ecumenical dialogue, including, for example, migrant churches.

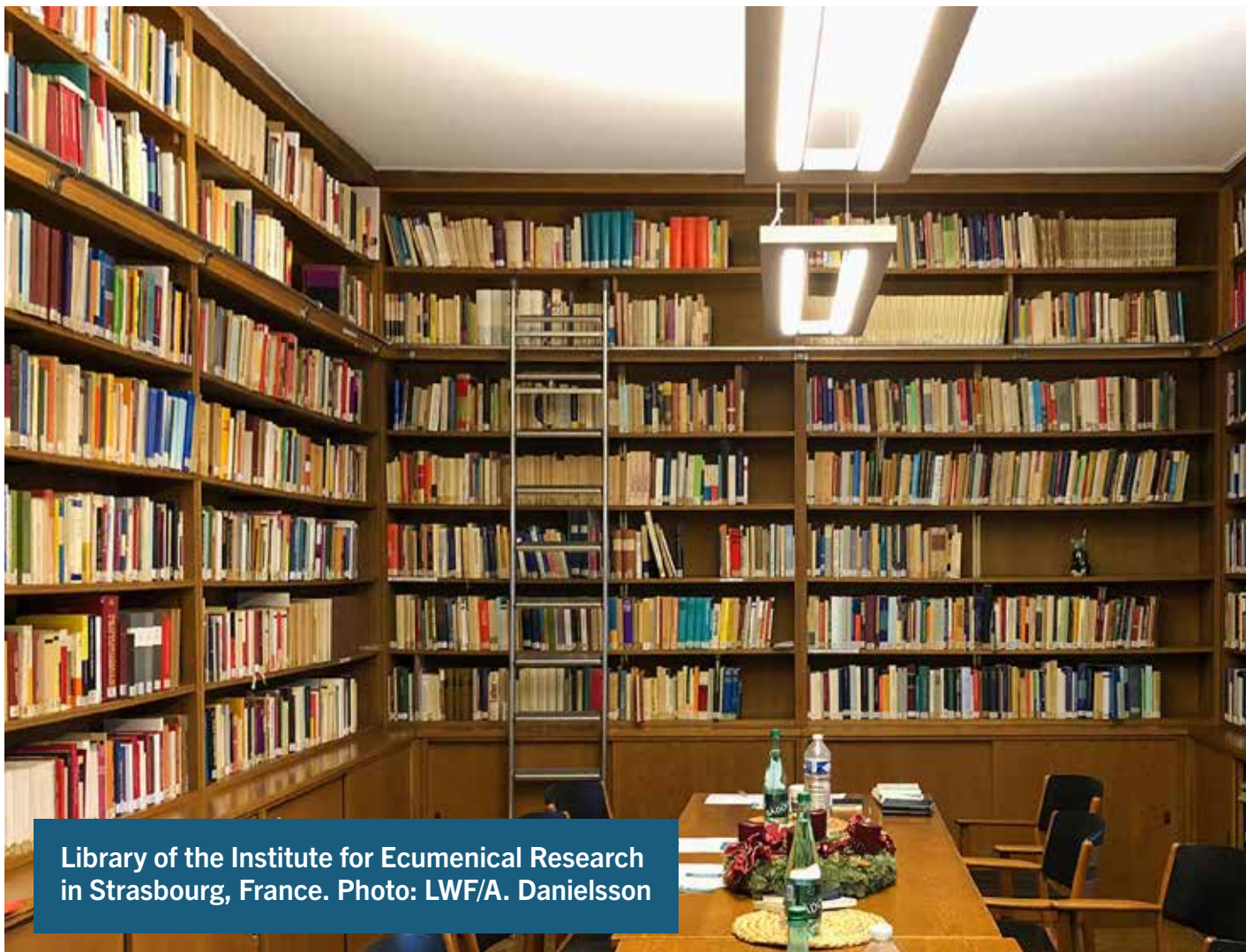
The LWF has continued to be engaged in the meeting of the General Secretaries of Christian World Communions. General Secretary Junge served as chairperson of the conference from 2016 to 2020.

LWF continued strong collaboration with the World Council of Churches, through engagement with its ecumenical work, e.g., Faith and Order, as well as programmatic work across areas of shared witness, including advocacy and theological education. Collaboration with other multilateral ecumenical actors, including ACT Alliance and Globethics, continued to be strong across various programmatic areas.

## INSTITUTE FOR ECUMENICAL RESEARCH IN STRASBOURG

Throughout all these years, a significant collaboration with the Institute for Ecumenical Research (IER) in Strasbourg has developed through joint theological projects and seminars





**Library of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France. Photo: LWF/A. Danielsson**

focusing on a theology of communion. The IER also continues to support the LWF’s ecumenical work by providing consultants for various bilateral dialogues. As the IER looks toward the future and the changing ecumenical landscape, it is also exploring how its work is more deeply grass-rooted in the life and witness of LWF member churches in the global south.

Ecumenism is not a state or a “condition” but rather a dynamic, a sustained impulse that seeks to live into God’s plan for humanity and creation. This dynamic is highlighted by the letter to the Ephesians which sees all coming together in the one Body of Christ, a communion which God creates and defines rather than one which we define or construct. The Lund Cross from the Joint Commemoration beautifully depicts this movement. Entering more fully into an understanding of “lived communion” is an ongoing challenge and one

which is posed with ever more intensity in the present ecclesial climate.

## ADVOCATES FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Peacebuilding, conflict resolution and reconciliation are increasingly important in today’s polarized world. Based on an understanding that churches are called to be peace makers and bridge builders, the LWF has organized several trainings to help develop these capacities in member churches.

We will contribute Lutheran theological perspectives into interfaith conversations, [foster] interfaith learning and interreligious literacy among communities and religious



**A water committee, raising awareness about clean water standards in Arauca, Colombia. Photo: LWF Colombia**

leaders [and] equip member churches to engage in interreligious relations in their own context. (LWF Strategy 2019–2024)

Conversations among people of different faith traditions and working together contribute to mutual understanding and trust between faith communities, social communities, and nations. As such, interfaith dialogue is a key component of creating conditions for peace. To assist interfaith discussions in support of peace, the LWF has prepared a reader to be used by Lutherans worldwide in the hope that this publication and other LWF resources may enhance our capacity to be “an active force for peace, justice, and reconciliation.” *Loving your neighbor – Encouraging constructive interfaith dialogue – A Reader* (2020) supports the idea that religion and religious organizations can be an active force for peace, justice, and reconciliation — a source of solutions rather

than a source of conflict. The reader was published in 2022.

In November 2022, the LWF brought together member churches from Ethiopia and Colombia for mutual accompaniment and support with the aim of strengthening pastoral leadership in peacebuilding. Leadership workshops with an emphasis on peacebuilding and dialogue took place in May 2023, with all synod presidents and other leaders of the EECMY.

Similar efforts are going on through the youth networks. (See Youth as Peace Messengers in chapter 4.2)



## A SINGING COMMUNION

From the Reformation times, hymns and chorals have been an integral part of the Lutheran tradition. In a new initiative that began in 2018, LWF invites its member churches to be part of a series dedicated to the Advent season. During each Advent a selection of LWF member churches has been invited to record hymns from their congregations which are posted daily. The hymns, shared on LWF social media platforms, offer insights into how Lutheran churches mark Advent through music.

The hymns have been warmly received worldwide and serve as a way of nurturing connection and showing solidarity through faith and hope. For some, the hymns have become a way to mark each day in Advent with family and congregations.

*Advent: A Singing Communion* has gathered nearly 130 hymns from across churches in the seven LWF regions and some of the World Service country programs over the past five years, allowing us to share in many joyful expressions of worship from the first day of Advent until Christmas eve.

“We are so thankful for the opportunity to be a part of this series! We are really enjoying having a glimpse of what Lutheran music and worship is like in other places – something that is especially important for children to see,” said Andrea Baxter, Director of Worship Renewal at Trinity Lutheran Church an ELCA congregation in 2021.

## CELEBRATING A MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY

The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the LWF in 2022 was a time for celebration and drawing attention to the continuous presence and witness of the communion’s member churches in seven regions of the world in the years since 1947 when the communion was founded in Lund, Sweden.

A highlight of the anniversary year was a photo exhibition showing milestone moments of the LWF, launched at the Council meeting in June. Speaking at the launch, General Secretary Burghardt emphasized the LWF’s commitment to building on what has been established. “Today, we harvest the fruits of our predecessors’ work and plant seeds for the future, so that coming generations can harvest the fruits,” she said.

The exhibition was expanded in the anniversary book *In Communion*, which is dedicated to all those who have made the communion’s work possible. It features seventy-five captioned photos, one per decade, capturing key moments of the past seven and a half decades. It is structured according to the four pillars of the LWF: joint efforts in theology, common initiatives in mission, working for unity, rescue for people in need.

The images include all the past assemblies starting with the First in Lund, Sweden in 1947, support of World Service to Palestinian refugees in Syria in 1951, the first All Africa Lutheran Conference in Marangu, Tanzania in 1955, and establishment of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France in the early 1960s. Also featured is an image taken in Ecuador in 1975 of one of 300 recipients of LWF scholarships, a 1980 celebration of the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Augsburg Confession in Germany, and the signing of the JDDJ in 1999, an interfaith meeting in Bangladesh in 2009, concluding with LWF’s response to the war in Ukraine in 2022.

## PREPARING FOR THE THIRTEENTH LWF ASSEMBLY

In a unanimous vote in June 2019, the LWF Council accepted with joy and appreciation the proposal of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland to host the Thirteenth LWF Assembly. Preparations for the Assembly began immediately with the appointment of the Assembly Planning

Committee. In 2020, Council approved the Assembly theme recommended by the committee and preparations began to prepare various study and worship resources, and reports for member churches and Assembly delegates.

“The Assembly theme of ‘One Body, One Spirit, One Hope,’ is important because the world is divided,” added Bishop Fabiny. “There is a great need for hope in our world. We see injustices in the world, poverty, discrimination, the situation of refugees, and all who are suffering. It is important to bring them hope, to speak about, and to act for hope.”

In October 2021, the LWF published the resource *One Body, One Spirit, One Hope* and distributed it to communion members as an invitation to begin engaging with the Assembly theme. In 2023 the LWF published the *Study Guide* which was shared at the regional Pre-Assemblies. At the European pre-assembly in Oxford, General Burghardt said about the Assembly Study Guide: “As churches we carry out that witness in very different contexts and

this is our strength. The Assembly Study guide is a helpful tool to enable us to become more effective messengers of peace, reconciliation and justice in a divided and suffering world.”

Excitement in anticipation of the Thirteenth Assembly grew as member church delegates gathered at the regional pre-assemblies for Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and North America, Africa and Asia between February and June this year. These included pre-meetings of women and youth. The bonds formed and shared commitment to the Assembly theme as well as encounters and discernment at the regional pre-assemblies equipped participants well for the gathering of the global communion in Kraków, Poland in September 2023.

“We look forward to meet people from all over the world. Those who have experienced Assemblies say they change your life and your mindset. Our hope is that this will also be the case here in Kraków,” said Anna Wrzesińska, chair of the Local Assembly Planning Committee.

“In the Large Catechism, Luther writes, ‘In baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and practice all his or her life.’ This Study Guide is an invitation for all the baptized to discern our common theme in light of the lived reality of our baptismal vocation and discipline.”  
— *Assembly Study Guide*





A display of the Thirteenth Assembly logo at the Asia Pre-Assembly. Photo: LWF/Jotham Lee



“We understand God’s mission to be holistic, which includes proclaiming the Gospel, diakonia (serving the neighbor), and advocating for human dignity, justice, and peace.”  
– LWF Strategy 2019–2024



The joy of worship during the commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in Windhoek, Namibia.  
Photo: LWF/Johanan Celine Valeriano

# STRENGTHENING MEMBER CHURCHES' PRESENCE AND VIBRANT WITNESS

**In the period since the vibrant and energizing meeting of the Twelfth LWF Assembly in Windhoek in 2017, the LWF has created new initiatives, and further developed others, to strengthen the presence and witness of member churches in their local and regional contexts and on global platforms. This work was shaped by the framework of the *LWF Strategy 2019–2024* that was created in response to resolutions and calls to action from the last Assembly.**

The support and resources of the communion have proven vital to the work and witness of Lutherans in these times where a clear vision, firm foundation, and strong support networks are key to speaking and acting on our faith. Through encounters organized by the LWF, churches have gathered to share their diverse perspectives on the questions of our times.

In the years since 2017, the communion revitalized various networks, strengthened leadership training, and supported projects and initiatives that enabled member churches to serve local communities, build capacity, and strengthen public witness. The voices of member churches were heard addressing forceful displacement, violent conflicts, the climate crisis, gender justice, the role of women and youth in church leadership, and the importance of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals identified by the United Nations (UN). And this work was rooted more firmly in the regions. Theological discernment with participation of experts from member churches in all regions of the LWF was an integral part of the work of the LWF, focusing especially on Lutheran identities, public theology, eco-theology, women in the ordained ministry as well as theological education.

These initiatives were successful even though member churches were being challenged

by the influences of fundamentalism and populism, and, in some regions, by changes in church membership and engagement. The achievements were possible due to the strength that comes from being part of a communion which enables sharing and learning together.

The newly created Department for Theology, Mission and Justice has enabled more strategic and coordinated support to and collaboration with the member churches. The reorganization in 2020 came out of LWF's commitment to keep together its holistic mission work through proclamation, diakonia, and advocacy, and is designed to serve member churches more effectively in their quest to provide faithful witness and service that is rooted in shared theological reflection and connected to their local contexts.

Throughout the past six years, voices of the churches have been heard clearly on local, regional, and global platforms defending marginalized and vulnerable people and supporting initiatives to address the climate crisis. Young people have played a pivotal role as mandated by the Twelfth LWF Assembly.

Strengthened by our faith and by living in communion, we raise our voices in witness to what we do as Lutherans in service to God's world.

We are passionate about the churches holistically witnessing to Christ in their contexts. We seek to equip and resource each other to witness to the liberating grace of God. The challenges that churches face are of a varying nature, given their specific contexts. By engaging in dialogue and collaboration, we strengthen and nurture each other. (*LWF Strategy 2019–2024*)



# 2017

July: Young Reformers at World Reformation Exhibition in Wittenberg, Germany, gain leadership skills and ecumenical knowledge.

August: LWF and the German National Committee host international meeting of women church leaders.

September: Inaugural meeting of LWF youth interfaith program, Peace Messengers training, is held in Jerusalem.

December: Europe's diaconal practitioners discuss "People on the Move – Bridges or Walls?" at a workshop in Romania.

November: "Learning Spirituality with Luther" is the theme of the 18<sup>th</sup> International Theological Seminar in Wittenberg.

October: LWF hosts Waking the Giant annual global meeting in Geneva to discuss church contributions to the UN 2030 Agenda.

July: The Asia Women's Conference in Medan, Indonesia, explores ways of overcoming gender-based violence.

# 2019

February: General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge visits the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and Symbols of Hope projects.

March: LWF and partners in the Waking the Giant initiative host a parallel event at the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York.

August: "Transforming Education" is the theme of International Youth Day event, co-hosted by LWF, WCC and World Student Christian Federation.

August: Applications open for the Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics and Management for an Economy of Life.

August: "Forming and Informing" is the theme of the second Being Lutheran webinar.

June: The Global Young Reformers Space becomes a monthly discussion platform about the impact of COVID-19 and other issues affecting youth.

April: A COVID-19 Preparedness and Response fund for World Service was set up with support from key related agencies.

# 2021

March: LWF shifts its COVID-19 RRF funding from short-term emergency framework to recovery and livelihood projects.

June: The Season of Creation 2021: "A home for all? Renewing the Oikos of God" features online intergenerational dialogue.

June: LWF announces first scholarships of new Hélène Ralivao Fund for women's theological education and leadership development in Africa.

December: The Peace Messengers fourth international workshop and the second in the year, is held in Rwanda.

November: LAC's diaconal practitioners meet in Brazil to address challenges to the churches' call to serve and stand for justice.

November: LWF and Faith to Action Network contribute to the Geneva Peace Week Digital series, "Peace is Possible!"

June: LWF, IRW, HIAS international conference in Geneva on "Welcoming the Stranger, Shaping the Future, Living as Neighbors"

# 2023

March: A 32-member LWF delegation takes part in online and in-person discussions at the 67<sup>th</sup> UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York.

May: "He restores my soul," theme of a consultation for persons caring for Ukrainian refugees in Czech Republic.

August: LWF opens invitations for applications for scholarships in theology and diaconal fields.



October: This month marks the beginning of an eight-week pilot course in Lutheran theology.

May: LWF and partners host global conference on churches as agents of justice amid populism.

April: Delegates from the member churches join online Global Young Reformers' Network discussion on the church revival.

March: First gathering of the Theological Education and Formation Strategic Advisory Group is held in Geneva.

# 2018

October: Asia women's consultation in Indonesia focuses on how to overcome violence and promote gender justice.

November: Women Doing Theology global consultation in Poland highlights strategies to promote feminist Lutheran theology.

November: LWF hosts a book launch for *Resisting Exclusion - Global Theological Responses to Populism* publication.

November: Representatives of networks of SGBV survivors in five countries speak at an LWF organized event at the University of Geneva.

April: LWF establishes the COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund (RRF), with member churches providing support particularly vulnerable churches.

March: After COVID-19 virus was declared a pandemic, LWF World Service began to adapt its work to protect frontline staff and people served.

February: LWF publishes *Loving your neighbor: Encouraging constructive interfaith engagement — A reader*

# 2020

August: Following deadly flash floods at the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Ethiopia, the LWF mobilizes its partners' support.

September: Online launch of LWF's Youth Peace Projects

October: LWF and its partners in Germany and South Africa launch the public theology open access resources.

October: LWF theology scholarship students meet online to explore understanding of what it means to be Lutheran

June: Diaconal actors in Europe meet in Finland to develop a framework for resources to promote conviviality in increasingly diverse contexts.

January: LWF's Global Young Reformers Network 2.0 declares 2022 the "Year of Peace."

January: LWF designates 2022 as a "Bible Year" to mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther's translation of the New Testament.

# 2022



**Meeting of the LWF Theological Education and Formation Strategic Advisory Group, in Geneva, 2020.**  
Photo: LWF/S. Gallay

## THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND FORMATION

The Twelfth Assembly resolution on theological education highlights the importance of theological education and formation in creating a sense of Lutheran identity and informing the church’s witness. The resolution states that “pastoral formation must integrate the social, political and economic dimensions, and the changing landscape of theology.”

Theological education is key to developing leaders equipped for the complexities and changing realities of today’s world. “Education that supports the ability to think in differentiated ways helps to avoid simplistic

approaches and instant categorizations,” General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt noted in her first report to the LWF Council in 2022. She emphasized that in today’s world, where simplistic answers to complicated questions are widespread, education that supports the ability to think in nuanced and differentiated ways is a vital tool for combating simplistic answers and instant categorization.

Responding to the Assembly call pointing to the importance of theological education in creating a sense of Lutheran identity, LWF launched a series of gatherings and resources to reflect on identity in the contexts of the many regions and countries where the member churches are located. The Theological Education and Formation (TEF) network has become a vital part of this process in its role of strengthening the study of theology, facilitating joint reflection, and building on the self-understanding of the LWF as a communion of

Lutheran churches. At a TEF meeting in 2020, Dr Ulla Morre Bidstrup, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, emphasized the urgency to ensure LWF's work is rooted in theological reflection "not because of ourselves but for our witness and as a reliable voice in the future." The network, which comprises representatives from the seven LWF regions, has been instrumental in accompanying small-scale projects in institutions such as the Faculdades EST Sustainability Institute in Brazil, the Lutheran Study Center in Indonesia, and the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Ethiopia, among others.

Every year, the LWF awards around 90 new scholarships in the fields of theology and diakonia. The aim is to equip individuals with knowledge, skills and confidence in order to strengthen the churches' capacities for holistic mission and prepare the next generation of leaders in the Lutheran communion. Interest in theological education is high. The number of candidates applying for LWF scholarships in theology has increased, and this is reflected in the growing number of approvals. In 2017, the LWF granted 10 scholarships for theological studies; the number increased to 28 in 2018, reached 42 in 2020; and 52 were approved in 2023. In addition, the LWF has established online platforms to bring current students together for mutual support, thematic discussions with LWF staff in different fields, and sharing academic resources.

The Assembly also issued a call for the communion to address the need for Lutheran theological education and formation which prepares pastors and diaconal personnel to serve in today's increasingly complex world. The call recognizes LWF's ability to bring member churches together for dialogue and shared learning about the challenges caused by new demographic, social, and cultural factors.

A first response to the call came in the form of an online eight-week pilot course in Lutheran theology, which began in October 2017 as part of LWF's commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. The course was aimed at undergraduate students but also pastors and church workers who were interested in reflecting on different aspects of Lutheran theology. Its modules included video

lectures, compulsory readings, and online and video tutorials. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the LWF quickly adapted to the inability to meet in person by facilitating various webinars addressing these challenges. The "Being Lutheran," public theology, interfaith, and other webinars reached a broad audience, strengthening the links between the local to the global and across the regions. (For more information, see chapter 4.1)

By grounding creative, critical, and contextual reflection in concrete action, LWF's theological work aims to strengthen the self-understanding and transformational capacity of its member churches. In that spirit, several pastors from across LWF member churches have participated in the annual International Theological Seminar at the LWF Center Wittenberg in Germany since 2017, combining theological study and excursions to historical sites in Luther's city. Instead of an in-person meeting during the pandemic, the group of 20 pastors from 17 countries who took part in the 2019 seminar utilized the network that had grown out of their encounter to share their concerns, encourage each other and exchange new ideas for church work. "It was very encouraging to connect globally in this way, but also quite frightening to realize the dimensions of this crisis [COVID-19]," said Damaris Grimmsmann, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover.

In addition, the communion offered support to on-site contextual learning projects at theological seminaries in Brazil, Czech Republic, India, Mexico, Romania, Russia, South Africa and Tanzania. An increasing number of courses and seminars are offered online, making them accessible to theological and diaconal scholars worldwide. The shift to online meetings and training during the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the trend. An example is the public theology lecture series, launched in October 2021 on the open-access resource platform developed through cooperation between the LWF, Berlin Center for Public Theology in Germany, and Beyers Naudé Center for Public Theology in South Africa. The series brings together leading experts from all over the world delivering lectures on different aspects of the contribution of theology to the public space.

Already in 2018, LWF offered an online course on Lutheran theology. The first group included 28 students from all LWF regions. The course was aimed at undergraduate students, pastors and church workers interested in reflecting on different aspects of Lutheran theology and provided a platform for trans-contextual learning. Participants represented a diverse global group of youth and adults, from different church contexts, and included both lay and ordained from across the communion. Rev. Dr Chad Rimmer, LWF Study Secretary for Lutheran Theology and Practice, noted: “The goal is to ask good theological questions from a Lutheran perspective across diverse contexts: “If we do that together, we can come to know who God is for us and why that matters today. That is a theological task that can lead us into the next 500 years of faith in our global Lutheran communion.”

In 2021, LWF launched an online course about climate justice and faith. Offered in collaboration with the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, it brought together participants from around the globe who learned about faith-inspired climate action in their local contexts. Topics included theology, ethics and spirituality related to climate justice, knowledge of climate science, and social change practices that connect ecological well-being with racial, economic and gender justice.

A more systematic approach to theological and diaconal scholarship programs, made possible by online meeting technology, was implemented for sustained accompaniment of scholarship holders. This included coming together for quarterly online meetings since 2021, which enable participants to learn about LWF’s work and build relationships, offer peer support, and reflect on their education journey. One of the outcomes of this exchange is a recently published journal on the transformative aspects of theological education for students themselves.

The rapid proliferation of online gatherings spurred by the pandemic led to a hybrid ecumenical consultation in Ghana in 2023 where more than 80 theologians and academics joined in online and in-person sessions about transformational teaching in

a post-pandemic world. Under the theme “Pedagogy and Pandemic,” they discussed how theological education has been transformed by the experiences of isolation and lockdown, and how seminaries and other places of learning can take advantage of the opportunities offered by online and hybrid approaches to education. “COVID has taught us to name our shared experiences of helplessness and realize that our role is to accompany people who struggle with questions, rather than having all the answers,” noted Dr Karla Koll, director of the School of Theological Sciences at the Latin American Biblical University, San José, Costa Rica.

To make LWF’s theological resources and other material available to member churches and interested individuals, the LWF began working on a Learning Platform in 2022. It will be launched in the second half of 2023. The tool includes courses and other resources and training materials that are offered online. Through this platform, the LWF also intends to increase co-branding with member churches and partner organisations, in order to make valuable resources available to a wide audience.

## UNDERSTANDING LUTHERAN IDENTITY

*We believe in the Holy Spirit* was the title of a 2019 consultation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia that launched a multi-year process of engaging member churches in defining the identity of the Lutheran church in their own contexts, understanding what it means to be Lutheran and the evolving socio-cultural contexts in which member churches serve and witness. The focus of the consultation was on the diversity of perspectives on the Holy Spirit represented across the communion. Discussion of presentations by a range of scholars led to a rich exchange of perspectives on the impact of Pentecostalism and fundamentalism on Lutheran churches. The objective was to identify the common markers of Lutheran identity among the rich diversity of contextual identities in the communion.



# ANDUNG-ANDUNG: A GRACE OF THEOLOGICAL AESTHETICS

- ▶ God is radically immanent in space, also in the smallest conceivable events, including in the event of grieving or mourning. In the event of the listening, sounds and voices are transformed into messengers of meaning and sensual-spiritual presence. In the event of the mourning, the wounds are transformed into grace.

Novriana Gloria Hutagalung presents her paper at the consultation “We Believe in the Holy Spirit: Global Perspectives on Lutheran Identities” in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2019. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

The consultation was followed by a series of webinars on *Being Lutheran* that offered a creative space for dialogue and shared theological reflection among churches about what Lutheran identity means to people in their regional and country contexts. They featured a variety of topics including the freedom of a Christian, indigenous and Lutheran traditions, the concept of the priesthood of all the baptized.

A survey, which explores views about baptism, beliefs, and liturgical practices, was sent to church leaders in 2021 with a request to circulate it to lay and ordained members of their churches. The survey was accompanied by a discussion guide to help pastors lead conversations and reflection at the parish or diocesan level. More than 2,000 responses were gathered. The publication of the Lutheran identity study document brings the results of the survey in conversation with theological reflections to renew our understanding of that being Lutheran means in today's contexts.

## PUBLIC THEOLOGY FOR THE COMMON GOOD

In an increasingly fragmented world, the Lutheran communion continues to encourage member churches to strive to be one in witness and service to God.

In May 2018, the LWF and the Evangelical Academy in Berlin, Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World), and the Church of Sweden, hosted a global conference on the role of churches as agents for justice in the face of populism. The speakers and participants from 25 countries shared perspectives from the points of view of church leadership, political science, and theology. They examined the mechanisms of exclusionary populist movements and clarified theological arguments against divisive politics, with the aim of encouraging participatory processes in church and society.

The conference was the focus of a publication in the LWF Studies series in 2019 titled *Resisting Exclusion – Global Theological Responses to Populism*. The volume offers

analyses and theological perspectives on the public role of churches in view of populist exclusionary policies.

Following the conference, at its meeting in June 2018, the LWF Council issued a message to the member churches urging them to be churches of hope that resist forces of exclusionary populism. The governing body called for dialogue and exchange within, and between, churches and urged them to discern, engage and resist, based on the faith, love and hope to which Christ has called them. Churches were encouraged “to resist oppressive and exclusionary systems and structures and to transform our communities into non-violent spaces of full, just and safe participation for all.”

At that meeting, a resolution adopted on the conflict situation in North-East and Central Nigeria expressed deep concern over how political, ethnic, and religious factors were motivating escalating violence. This included a renewed wave of attacks by nomadic Fulani herdsmen against sedentary farming communities that had led to killing women and children in places of worship.

As in previous years, LWF actively supported the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) ecumenical initiative with the Council for World Mission, World Communion of Reformed Churches, the World Methodist Council and the WCC. LWF participated in advisory group meetings, provided staff support, and contributed to the Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics and Management for an Economy of Life in Berlin with Lutheran participants in 2022, and the relaunch of the Zaccheus Tax campaign in South Africa in May 2023.

## STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP IN CHURCHES

Through its Leadership program, the LWF seeks to inspire member churches to engage in continuous processes of developing leadership



capacity at all levels in order to make churches more sustainable. This includes topics on good governance and management, gender justice, climate justice and peace, as well as fostering principles of inclusivity as part of the Lutheran church identity.

The annual Retreat of Newly Elected Leaders (RoNEL), the program established in 2015, continues to familiarize participants with LWF’s work and offer opportunity for building relationships. Church leaders such as bishops and pastor presidents, who have recently assumed office come together to reflect on their vocation, explore the practice of church leadership, and deliberate on what it means to be leaders in the Lutheran communion.

The first part of the retreat takes place at the Communion Office in Geneva and the second at the LWF Center in Wittenberg. More than

60 leaders from all seven LWF regions have participated in RoNEL since its inception.

During the pandemic, in-person gatherings of the RoNEL were suspended and replaced by an online seminar in November 2021. “Leadership and Episcopal Ministry in the LWF Communion” was the theme of the 2022 retreat. The program generated conversation about what constitutes leadership and how it can be transformative for both the church and society at large.

“Leadership is a collaborative activity that involves the participation of people, groups and sectors of work. Delegate, distribute, and trust tasks [to others]: it is part of healthy leadership. This is the kind of leadership we need to develop in church and institutions,” said Rev. Dr Nestor Paulo Friedrich, LWF Vice-President for Latin America and the Caribbean, at RoNEL gathering in 2022.



Participants meet in Geneva for the 6<sup>th</sup> International Seminar for Lay Leaders, in 2023. Photo: LWF/S. Gallay



**Women Human Rights Advocacy for Faith-Based Organizations workshop. LWF/S. Gally**

## DEVELOPING LAY LEADERSHIP

The LWF continued to play a key role in supporting the development of lay leadership in member churches through the series of International Lay Leaders' Seminar hosted at the Communion Office and the LWF Center in Wittenberg. The seminar invites participants to explore the meaning of leadership in the Lutheran communion and provides an opportunity to learn about LWF's work. The focus is on developing leaders who are equipped to address the contemporary challenges of a religiously diverse society, the climate crisis, and gender justice.

"This seminar acknowledges and respects the theological learning capacity of lay people and

the contribution they make to our churches" Communication manager in the Lutheran Church of Australia.

Jebiskel Mirdha from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Himalayan States who participated in lay leaders' seminar, said after the training: "The course made me realize that leadership is like sowing seeds and developing the gifts God gave to each one of us".

The 2019 event brought together 21 participants from 16 countries. During the pandemic, the seminars were held online. By June 2023, in-person gatherings were again possible, and participants gathered in Geneva prior to moving on to Wittenberg.



# WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND GENDER JUSTICE

The full inclusion of women in the ordained ministry has been affirmed by every LWF Assembly since 1984. Today, approximately 90 percent of LWF's member churches ordain women, and there is a growing number of female church leaders at all levels of the church. However, this does not mean that women enjoy full recognition of their leadership roles in the different contexts of the LWF communion, and we are still on the way to gender justice.

In direct response to the resolutions from the Twelfth LWF Assembly in Windhoek, the strategy for 2019–2024 states: "We will promote women's leadership in church and society and gender-equal involvement in discussion and decision-making processes [and] we will promote the full inclusion of women in the ordained ministry."

The strategy also commits the LWF to ensuring and developing space and structures for gender-just participation in the life of the global communion and states that special attention will be given to further develop gender and regional balance, in particular the representation of women in leadership roles.

As part of celebrations to mark 500 years of the Reformation in 2017, LWF's Women in Church and Society desk and the German National Committee of the LWF co-hosted a meeting of women bishops and church leaders from around the world. This was an opportunity to share experiences from their respective contexts on the opportunities and difficulties for women in positions of church leadership and to offer each other advice and support.

In the period since the Twelfth Assembly, several churches have taken important steps in recognizing women for the ministry of Word and sacraments. Women were ordained for the first time, elected as heads of churches, and women's ordination anniversaries were celebrated across the communion.

In April 2018, after four decades of women's active involvement as evangelists, teachers and other roles, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand ordained its first two women pastors Rev. Jongkolnee Sampachanyanon Sim and Rev. Somporn Kulachote. In October the same year, the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil elected Rev. Silvia Beatrice Genz as president, the first female head of the church.

As the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland marked 45 years of women's ordination in 2019, it also marked another milestone: in February, women made up the majority of those elected to serve on its General Synod. The same year in April, the Mexican Lutheran Church (ILM) celebrated 10 years of women's ordination. In November 2020, Ms Karina Arntzen was elected vice-president of the Evangelical Church of the River Plate (IERP). In her new role, she became the first layperson to hold this position and the second woman ever elected to the office since 1965.

Upon her consecration as head of the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA-ND) in May 2021, Bishop Naledzani Josephine Sikhwari became the first Lutheran woman bishop in Africa. In September the same year, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi ordained its first female pastor, Rev. Bertha Godfrey Munkhondya.

At a July 2021 online fellowship meeting of leaders of the three LWF member churches in Japan, LWF joined in congratulating the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church for its Assembly's decision to approve women's ordination. The same year in October, the Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland voted to approve women to be ordained as pastors, and in May 2022, the first nine women were ordained.

In October 2022, the Lutheran Church of Taiwan (Republic of China) elected Rev. Selma Chen (Shu-Chen) its president, making the LWF Council member the first woman leader of the church, and one of the first female Lutheran leaders in the Asian region. When Rev. Sally Azar of the Evangelical Lutheran Church

in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) was ordained in January 2023, she became the first female Palestinian pastor in the church. The ELCJHL invitation to the ordination read in part: “Sally’s ministry sends a powerful message of acceptance and progress in the church’s journey toward gender justice.”

Several churches, some of which are highlighted below, also celebrated milestones in their ongoing commitment to women’s ordination and leadership. In September 2017, the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church celebrated 50 years of women’s ordination. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America marked 50 years of women’s ordination in October 2020, while the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil marked its 40-year milestone in October 2022, the same year that the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (UELCI) celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women’s ordination. In April 2023, the Evangelical Church in Denmark celebrated 75 years of women’s ordination, the same year that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia marks 30 years of ordaining women.

“Ordaining women is important not only to comply with numbers and ratios, or to practice what we believe is theologically correct, but also to have more and wider spaces in the life of the people, of the members of the church,” said Elizabeth Arciniegas, Colombia.

“We envision and continuously strive for a radical transformation in all member churches, not only for the ordained women but for women in general, that they be treated with equal dignity, and given equal recognition for their status, leadership, and contribution to the diverse ministries of the Church,” noted Ranjita Christie Borgoary, LWF Council member from India.

The Twelfth LWF Assembly called on the LWF Communion Office to organize a process to study women’s experiences in the ordained ministry, address barriers, and affirm the way forward. The gathering of these stories has concluded, and a report will be shared at the Thirteenth Assembly. It includes stories of

empowerment and affirmation, of struggles and challenges faced in ministry.

Investment in women’s leadership was further reinforced in 2020, when LWF created the H  l  ne Ralivao Fund, named after one of the first female theologians in the Malagasy Lutheran Church, and a pioneer gender justice advocate in Madagascar, who was murdered in February the same year. The fund’s purpose is to empower primarily women in the African region in theology, gender justice and leadership through scholarships for post-graduate studies and short-term training and research on issues related to the intersection between theology, gender justice and leadership.

The initial group of ten students from LWF member churches in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe were awarded scholarships in 2021 to pursue studies at church-run seminaries and universities mostly in their countries or within the African region.

“While the church takes an active stance in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and serving the neighbor, it also needs well trained personnel to support parishioners who are weighed down by their daily problems,” explained Rev. Tientcheu Djomgoue Marie Besong from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon. She was sharing how she will be using the scholarship to strengthen her work as a hospital chaplain.

Over the past years the Gender Justice and Women’s Empowerment Network, formerly Women in Church and Society or WICAS, has been essential in leading implementation of the LWF *Gender Justice Policy* in the regions. In addition to LWF’s four official languages, member churches have translated the policy into more than 20 other local languages and new translations are ongoing. Inspired by this progress and many others not mentioned in this report, but conscious of how much remains to be done, the LWF marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its *Gender Justice Policy* in 2023. It is an occasion to affirm the communion’s commitment to promoting the full and meaningful participation of women in church



**Youth meeting prior to the Asia Pre-Assembly in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Photo: LWF/Jotham Lee**

and society and the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence and injustice.

## EMPOWERING YOUTH FOR LEADERSHIP

The Twelfth Assembly adopted two resolutions calling for increased support of youth as leaders of today and tomorrow within the communion and their home churches.

At its first meeting in 2018, following the Assembly the Council strongly affirmed the Assembly’s Youth Message which called on church leaders to focus on intentionally including young people as they bring specific skills, knowledge, and experience to church life. The Council urged member churches to

encourage meaningful participation of youth in church life and work.

The enhanced focus on the development of youth leadership over the past six years has been a success. The Youth program is visible, and the influence of young people extends into leadership in the areas of peace and climate change.

The Assembly also called on member churches to ensure youth involvement in decision making, planning, and strategizing, and to support the right of young people to vote.

Several member churches have taken steps to increase the number of young people in their governing bodies. In 2019 the General Synod of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD), to which seven member churches of the LWF belong, decided that from





**Peace Messengers meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 2022. Photo: LWF/S. Kit**

2021 at least eight of its 50 members should be under the age of 27 by 1 January of the year in which their term of office begins.

In the Twelfth Assembly resolution on youth participation, the Young Reformers' Network was commended for conveying the insights of the Reformation for the new generation and was urged to strengthen and broaden its circle to include those preparing for leadership in the church.

Effective June 2020, the Young Reformers Space became a monthly discussion platform within the Global Young Reformers Network 2.0 (GYRN). Youth from LWF's global network of member churches gathered online to learn from one another, share ways of working, express ideas and raise questions that need to be addressed in church and society. Convened by LWF Youth on the last Friday of

each month, the platform offers youth from across all LWF regions the opportunity to discuss the three LWF youth priorities: revival of churches; equity and education; and two cross-cutting priorities, climate justice, and youth participation.

In 2020, a youth camp of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile with participants from Argentina, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico, allowed young people to learn from each other about mission and what it means to be a vibrant local church.

"The theme of mission touched me so deeply that I can say I arrived home with a much clearer idea of what I want to do with my life," said Ariadna Mutizabal, youth participant.

Rev. Hemir Ochoa of the Lutheran Church in Chile, who was one of the leaders, described



the experience as “the renewal of hope as the young people tell us again and again that they too are the soul and spirit of the Lutheran church and of the Christian world.”

## PEACE MESSENGERS

In 2017 the LWF launched a youth program on peace: the Peace Messengers. Its inaugural meeting in Jerusalem in September 2017, included a five-day training on peace and conflict analysis, and on conflict resolution. During the workshop, hosted by the ELCJHL, young people learned about tools for advocacy, negotiation, and mediation, and how to draw on their individual experiences and faith and cultural traditions to make the tools relevant to their specific contexts. The objective was to enable participants to plan and facilitate training in their own communities.

At the 2019 Peace Messengers international training in Tallinn, Estonia, young people from LWF’s regions discussed the connection between a vision for peace and understanding conflict in multicultural contexts. Although no online training took place at the height of the pandemic, interest in the program has increased, such that the LWF hosted two international trainings in 2022, one in Geneva, Switzerland, in June followed by Kigali, Rwanda in December. To date over 70 youth from over 30 member churches have individually taken part in the annual training. In turn, they train local youth, increasing the number of young people who have gained such skills.

The *Peace Messengers Training Manual for Participants* has become the main teaching tool for building skills such as active listening, finding common ground, analyzing conflict to identify issues of power and human rights, and seeking creative solutions together. With the newly acquired skills, trainees are expected to train more youth at the local level and initiate each a peace building project. After the Peace Messengers training in Rwanda, over 50 people aged 14-18 participated in several community-based initiatives under the “Sparks of Peace” project. Theophile Mugabo, one of the project’s initiators, noted:

“This was a unique opportunity for the young people to engage with people who had been directly affected by the genocide and learn from their experiences. They saw firsthand how the community was able to reconcile after the genocide. It was eye-opening as they learned about the importance of forgiveness, dialogue, and unity in achieving peace.”

Ian Heseltine, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, said he had “learned about the importance of discovering what unites us as people, while continuing to celebrate diversity.” He said he hoped “to share the knowledge from our foundational training, contextual storytelling, and personal experiences of Rwanda with the broader church, and strive to make an impact in smaller communities across the United States.”

Johanna Kluge, Executive Coordinator for International Youth Work at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, said “I’m convinced that it is not enough to wait for others when I’m longing for peace now. I have to take the first steps to come together in interfaith dialogue.”

An activity co-hosted with the Oman-based ecumenical and interfaith Al Amana Centre in observance of the UN Interfaith Harmony Week was part of the global Young Reformers Network 2.0 events for 2022, the “Year of Peace.” Also, LWF youth have continued to show leadership in advocacy for climate justice and care for creation, locally and globally. (For more information, see chapter 4.3) To encourage youth leadership in the areas of peace and climate justice, LWF now provides seed funding for creative ideas that reach the wider community with small grants of up to EUR 2,000 per church project.

## SERVING THE NEIGHBOR IN TIMES OF NEED

Diakonia is an important pillar of the holistic mission of churches, which LWF promotes by supporting its member churches as they serve people in need in their contexts. This includes



Ms Canaan Osagie speaking at a Symbols of Hope event in southern Nigeria. Photo: SOH Nigeria



support to projects initiated by churches at the local level and LWF's global initiatives focusing on different themes.

The member church projects provide hands-on solutions to pressing needs in the congregations and wider community. The priorities identified by the churches include theological training, advocacy for human rights, health service delivery, livelihood initiatives, and women's and youth empowerment, which LWF supports through long-term projects and short-term projects including the COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund. (For more information, see chapter 4.1)

There are nearly 60 such projects currently being implemented by churches mostly in the global south but also a few in other regions. In Chennai, India, a skills' training program by the Christ Lutheran Church empowers often-discriminated transgender persons to live with dignity, self-respect and economic independence. More than 200 people have gone through the program since it was begun in 2020. "Not only have I started to live a dignified life by working on my own, I no longer need to worry about food, shelter, and health care. I thank the Lutheran church for their commitment in helping the marginalized," says beautician Swetha, who benefited from the project. In Germany, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony continues an initiative Anders Wachsen (Growing differently) through exhibitions to demonstrate how everyday lifestyles can promote Christian responsibility for justice, peace, the integrity of creation and build a welcoming community. The purpose of the exhibition is to make congregation members to reflect on what it means to follow Jesus Christ. We hope it can encourage people to think about distributive justice from the fruits of their Christian roots, said one of the people involved in the project.

LWF also encourages collaboration in diaconal efforts at the regional level. Since 2010, LWF's member churches in Europe have been searching for ways to express the core meaning of diakonia in relation to increasing diversity and growing inequality in their context. Over the past years "conviviality" (the art and practice of living together) emerged as a new

core concept for local diakonia. Conviviality focuses on everyday life and living together in solidarity, provides a vision for transformative change, and develops theological ideas in practice.

At a 2017 meeting in Balatonszárszó, Hungary, representatives from diaconal institutions of LWF member churches in the region analyzed recommendations from the LWF conviviality process and developed core themes for the new three-year phase of workshops in the context of the Twelfth Assembly outcomes. The International Academy for Diakonia and Social Action (Interdiac), based in the Czech Republic has been co-facilitating this process.

*The People on the Move* initiative, launched in 2017, was part of the Seeking Conviviality process. Through it, European churches reflected together on the impact of growing diversity and fragmentation in Europe, seeking ways of collaborating with each other to create the conditions for peaceful coexistence in a diverse society. The initiative focused on how churches in Europe can respond to the rapid growth of populist and nationalistic movements, which often use religious symbols and arguments in attacks on minorities. The series wrapped up in 2020 with a workshop under the theme "People on the Move: Creating Convivial Theology."

Stories of existing church programs served as a study for the art and practice of living together, and they have been compiled in four booklets.

In the context of the Symbols of Hope (SoH) initiative, the LWF has been supporting three of its member churches in Africa in their work with migrants and returnees since 2017. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) and Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) receive support to raise awareness at community and national levels about the risks of irregular migration and human trafficking in contexts of high unemployment, and weak or non-existent social security systems. In collaboration with the churches' local partners, pastors and diaconal workers also receive training in psychosocial support and counselling.



Potential and returning migrants are offered alternative means of earning a living and creating job opportunities for themselves and others.

In Ethiopia for example, SoH had reached more than 36,200 potential migrants (22,000 female, 14,200 male) by August 2021, helped to organize self-help women's groups comprising 500 potential and returnee migrants, and trained over 400 religious leaders. In Nigeria, the LCCN Bronnum Lutheran Seminary added an orientation course on irregular migration and human trafficking to its curriculum in 2021. "We want to equip the church with pastors, evangelists, teachers, diaconal workers and community leaders who understand irregular migration and human trafficking and the risks involved," said SoH Nigeria national coordinator Rev. Emmanuel Subewope Gabriel.

Waking the Giant, a global LWF initiative launched in 2019, aims to empower churches to contribute effectively to the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development. The initiative provides churches and church-related actors with training and tools that link their work to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the four LWF target countries—Colombia, Liberia, Tanzania and the United States, churches and faith-based organizations have been involved in mapping their work in the areas of health, education, peace and justice, and collecting data on their own contribution to specific SDGs. "Nobody has done a similar mapping before. And through this, we see now how more than ten churches, church-related and ecumenical bodies, have started to align their work with the SDGs," said Saint John York, who coordinates efforts in Liberia.

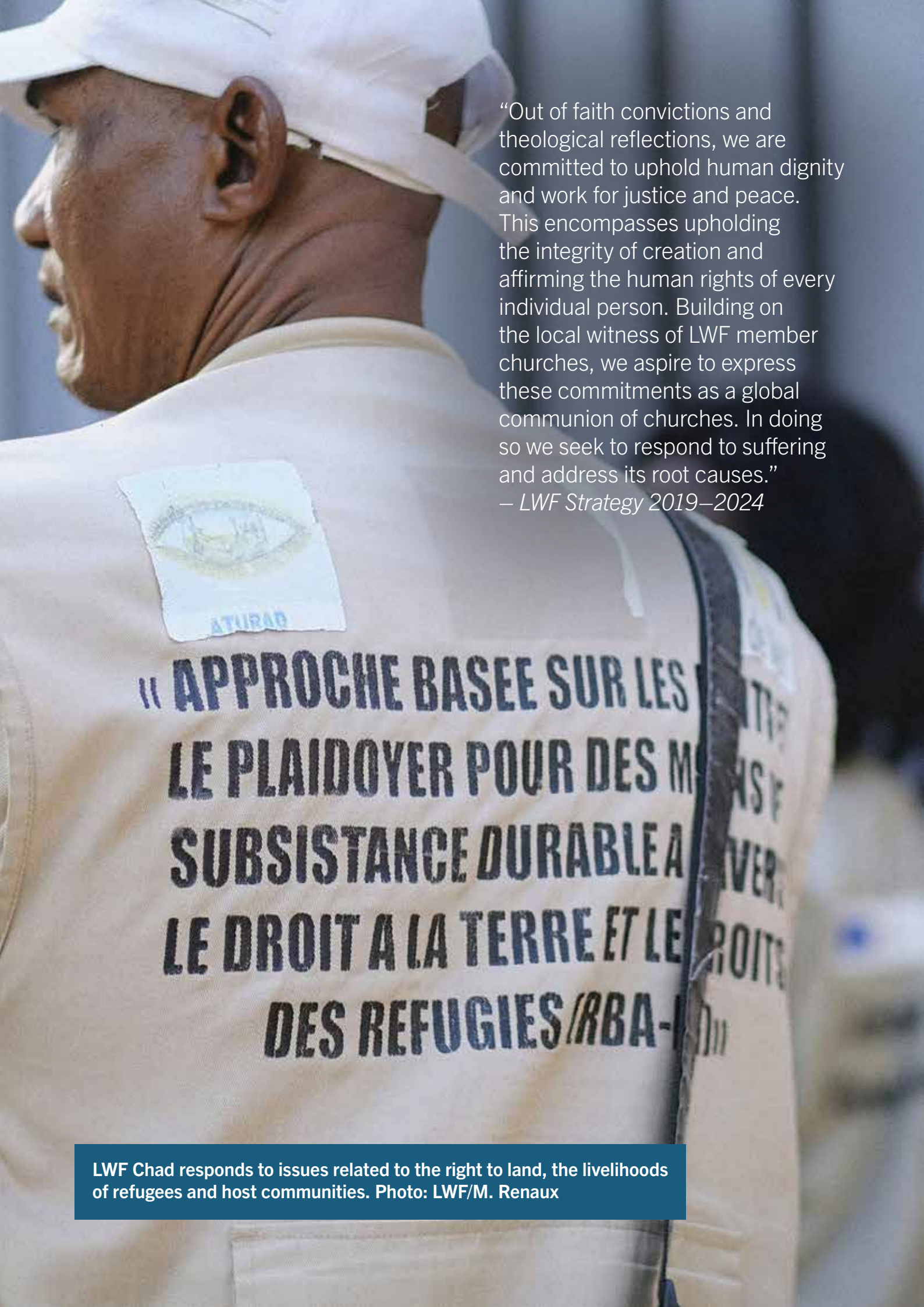
Initiatives to confront poverty and economic injustice in Africa were supported through youth-led leadership and livelihood projects in Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, Liberia, Zambia, and Namibia.

## PROVIDING STABILITY WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

When disaster strikes, churches can provide stability in a world that changes rapidly due to their local presence, their experience in dealing with such shocks, and the potential to remain long after the immediate impact. Through the Churches and Emergencies program, which was established in 2019, churches are empowered to be prepared for and effectively respond to emergencies in their contexts. LWF's expertise in church knowledge and theological understanding on the one hand, and humanitarian and advocacy know-how are combined to strengthen collaboration.

The joint work between LWF member churches and World Service is being implemented in select target countries in Asia and Latin America since 2020 including Myanmar, Nepal and Colombia/Venezuela. It includes preparing emergency response systems that incorporate training community members on topics such as early warning and first aid, building proper infrastructure including evacuation centers and grain banks, and supporting local communities affected by flooding, earthquakes, violent conflict or other emergencies. A *Guidance Note* developed in 2021 complements this collaboration by providing practical recommendations for meaningful engagement between the member churches and World Service country programs. Such collaboration begins with exchange visits to learn about each other. "We could not have started without volunteers from the church," said LWF Myanmar country representative. In May 2022 a joint visit to Venezuela between the country program staff, the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela and the regional secretary took place. Similar encounters are ongoing in the other regions.



A close-up, profile view of a man wearing a white cap and a light-colored shirt. The back of the shirt has a small patch with a logo and the word 'ATURAD' below it. Below the patch, there is large, bold, black text in French. The text is partially cut off on the right side. The background is blurred.

“Out of faith convictions and theological reflections, we are committed to uphold human dignity and work for justice and peace. This encompasses upholding the integrity of creation and affirming the human rights of every individual person. Building on the local witness of LWF member churches, we aspire to express these commitments as a global communion of churches. In doing so we seek to respond to suffering and address its root causes.”  
– LWF Strategy 2019–2024

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LWF Chad responds to issues related to the right to land, the livelihoods of refugees and host communities. Photo: LWF/M. Renaux



# PROMOTING HUMAN DIGNITY, JUSTICE, AND PEACE

**One of the unique expressions of LWF’s presence around the world over the past seven and a half decades has been its implementation of humanitarian and development work, led by its Department for World Service, and its advocacy for justice and human rights, which is now led by the Action for Justice unit.**

From the very beginning, the member churches mandated World Service as their key actor in serving all people in need without discrimination of any kind and empowering them to advocate for life with dignity and justice.

As LWF’s international humanitarian response and development arm, World Service is one of the largest faith-based humanitarian actors in the world. LWF’s intervention in this sector is particularly known for timely, compassionate, and professional humanitarian response, and for presence in hard-to-reach areas. Our work is people-centered, rooted locally, and connected globally with a commitment to the most vulnerable people.

The World Service 2019–2024 global strategic, titled *For Hope and a Future*, provides direction for response to increasingly complex and ever-changing operational contexts. It offers a basis to develop three interrelated programmatic areas: livelihoods for a just and sustainable life; quality services to ensure people can access their fundamental rights; and protection and social cohesion to enable people to thrive when freed of discrimination, abuse and exploitation.

Inspired by God’s love for all of humanity, World Service is dedicated to challenge and address the causes and effects of human suffering and poverty, linking local response to national and international advocacy. (*World Service Global Strategy 2019–2024*)

The three programmatic areas cut across the humanitarian, recovery, and development phases of our work, with advocacy and a

rights-based approach embedded into each. The work carried out upholds LWF’s values and principles of dignity, human rights, justice, transparency and accountability, neutrality and impartiality, inclusion and diversity, gender justice and climate justice, and meaningful participation of all people.

Working together with others enables the LWF to prepare for and respond to emerging challenges that vulnerable people face in fragile contexts all over the world. Our partnerships with key stakeholders including the member churches and their related organizations, ecumenical, interfaith and international organizations and governments are critical. We build the capacity of the communities we serve to claim their rights and hold governments and other duty-bearers accountable.

Over the years, the approach to our advocacy work has been strengthened by addressing the root causes of oppression and injustice through building the capacity of the member churches and supporting the World Service country programs. In 2020, the Action for Justice unit was established with a focus on five key areas: human rights, gender justice, climate justice, peace, and humanitarian advocacy.

This was followed by the development of an *Advocacy Framework*. It explains LWF’s local to global approach and methodologies, highlighting the need for advocacy work that is firmly grounded in both gospel and human rights.

“Advocacy in the LWF flows from faith and is grounded in Scripture and a Lutheran theology of human dignity, justice, peace, and reconciliation. [It] promotes the protection of the human rights of all people, particularly those that are marginalized, oppressed, and vulnerable to injustices.” (*LWF Advocacy Framework: Action for Justice from Local to Global*)

# 2017

June: World Service and Church of Sweden sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthening joint collaboration in the future.

July: Training event on Women's Human Rights Advocacy for Faith-based Organizations is held in Geneva.

September: Djibouti government recognizes LWF's work as refugee children are welcomed into the national education system.

December: Young climate activists represent the LWF at the 24<sup>th</sup> COP climate conference in Katowice, Poland.

September: LWF organizes a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) capacity building workshop for civil society organizations in Angola.

July: Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training for Faith-Based Organizations is held in Geneva.

June: Participants at workshop in Geneva discuss security challenges from the global push toward "localization" of humanitarian action.

# 2019

April: LWF and Caritas Internationalis discuss cooperation in Colombia and Nepal; cyclone Idai response in Southern Africa, and South Sudan conflict.

July: LWF-operated Augusta Victoria Hospital inaugurates a state-of-the-art PET/CT Scanner.

August: LWF honors its "Women Humanitarians" on World Humanitarian Day, 19 August. Women make up 40 percent of World Service workforce.

December: The webinar "A River with Rights" explores how ethnic communities are fighting for the Atrato River in Colombia.

November: "Faith Actors Responding, Preventing and Advocating to End Gender-Based Violence in Uganda" webinar is part of the global 16 days of activism.

November: LWF and its partners co-host nine online sessions of the annual Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training.

November: LWF Nepal engages in UPR alternative reports on the rights of Freed Haliya, Santhal and Dalits.

# 2021

January: LWF Jerusalem and Canadian Lutheran World Relief, launch project to improve training and employment for Palestinian women.

June: LWF moderated the World Health Organization webinar on the role and impact of faith actors in overcoming barriers to COVID-19 vaccination.

September: LWF launches online course leading to qualification for a Certificate for Climate Justice and Faith.

September: With over 2 million people risking malnutrition, LWF distributes food vouchers to vulnerable households in Jubbaland, Somalia.

July: US President Joe Biden visits LWF-operated Augusta Victoria Hospital and announces a major support for East Jerusalem hospitals.

July: At LAC meeting in El Salvador, LWF consolidates a climate justice advocacy plan, conducts training, and strengthens regional work.

April: LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt visits the World Service program in Uganda.

# 2023

February: LWF General Secretary undertakes advocacy visit to the United States, including the Lutheran Office for World Community in New York.

February: LWF marks one year of Ukraine response with *Together* publication.

March: LWF Nepal country program hosts World Service regional meeting, focusing on building resilience in communities.

# 2018

November: LWF and Islamic Relief Worldwide sign MoU to renew commitment of collaboration in humanitarian causes.

November: During a training on security, in Cameroon, participants learn to identify risks and follow a security plan.

November: The LWF delegation at COP 23 in Bonn, Germany advocates for climate justice.

November: Interreligious Campaign “Precious in Gods’ Eyes” coincides with the 16 Days of Activism to Overcome Gender-Based Violence campaign in November.

June: LWF participates in the fifth formal consultation on the Global Compact on Refugees in Geneva.

April: The East Africa Regional Meeting of LWF country programs in Juba, South Sudan, strategizes on issues of common concern.

March: LWF expresses its support for Colombian human rights organizations at a UN Human Rights Council side event in Geneva.

September: Workshop in Kampala, Uganda mobilizes religious leaders to protect and promote civil society space.

October: LWF Communion Office hosts women human rights activists from Nepal who share about the situation in the country.

November: LWF hosts “Human Rights in South Sudan,” side event to the UPR process in Geneva.

December: At Global Refugee Forum in Geneva, LWF pledges continuous support to refugees through UN processes.

June: Series of webinars on “Human Rights, Ethics and Climate Change” begins.

February: A side event of the HRC 43<sup>rd</sup> session in Geneva focuses on obstacles to health services for Palestinian children from Gaza.

January: In Yaounde, Cameroon, World Service Regional Management Team discusses “forgotten crises” in the West and Central African region.

# 2020

September: LWF is named co-chair of the Global Protection Cluster’s task team, with UNHCR and Buddhist organization Soka Gakkai International.

May: LWF publishes *Guidance Note* on joint engagement of World Service and member churches

August: LWF and its partners provide humanitarian assistance following earthquake and tropical storms in Haiti.

December: The LWF President visits the country program in Cameroon, which is supporting refugees from the Central African Republic.

April: LWF opens a country office in Warsaw, Poland, to provide humanitarian and diaconal support to Ukrainian refugees.

February: Following the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, LWF sets up an emergency program for Ukrainian refugees.

February: LWF’s develops first Advocacy Framework for advocacy on climate, gender, peacebuilding, human rights and humanitarian work.

# 2022

June: LWF facilitates a peacebuilding workshop with the EECMY synod presidents, in Addis Ababa.

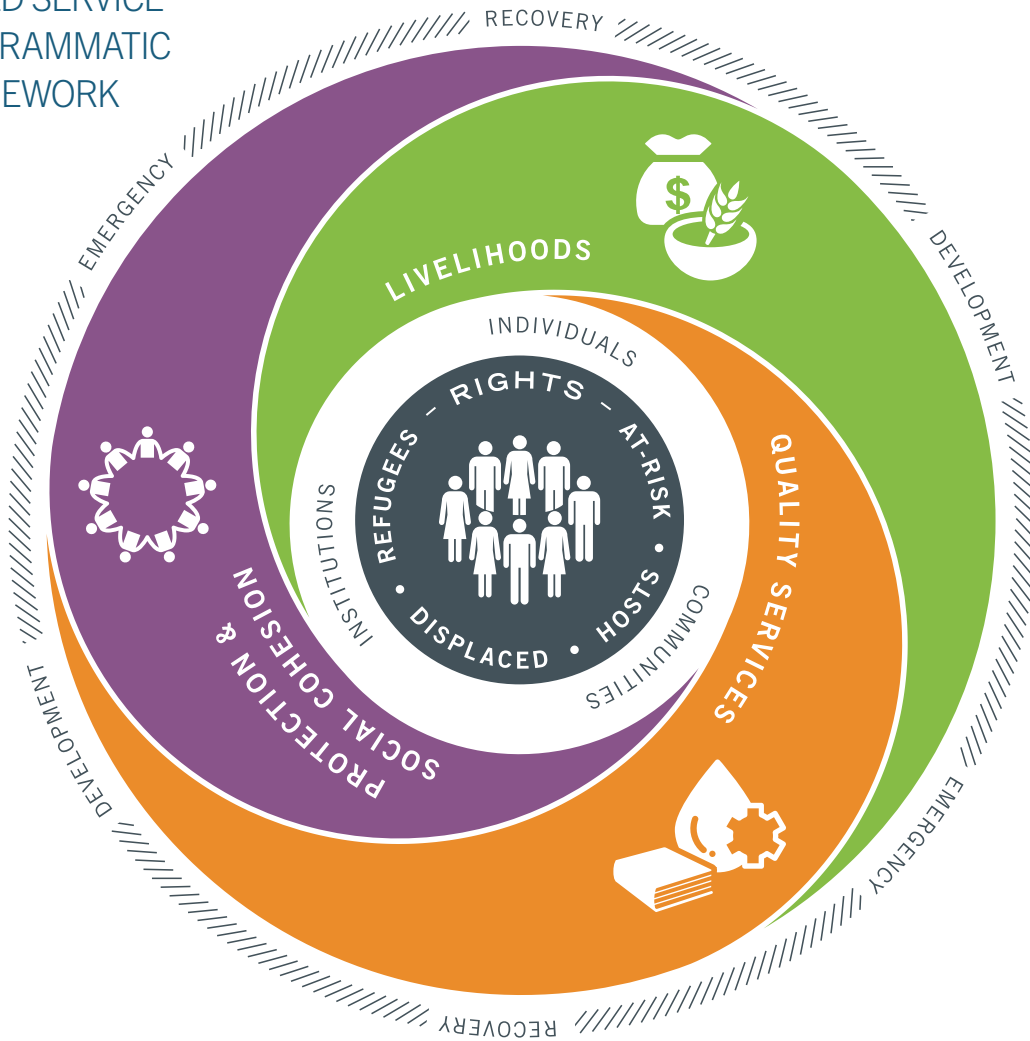
June: LWF opens office in Kharkiv to provide support toward internally displaced people inside Ukraine.

June: LWF is among civil society organizations endorsing a new document “Build Forward,” on recovery and reconstruction in Ukraine.

July: LWF and partners urge United States Agency for International Development to restore suspended food aid to Ethiopia.



## WORLD SERVICE PROGRAMMATIC FRAMEWORK



When the framework was launched in 2022, LWF General Secretary Burghardt noted the new framework “complements our calling for diakonia, our humanitarian assistance, our livelihoods programs and our agenda for sustainable development.”

## RESPONDING TO NEW, PROTRACTED AND COMPLEX CRISES

Since 2017, the number of forcibly displaced people in the world has increased due to multiple disasters and conflicts. Since the last Assembly, this has been compounded by complex protracted military conflicts, the

climate crisis, and COVID-19. When large-scale disasters strike such as earthquakes, cyclones, or flooding, the LWF provides emergency relief to the people affected. As one of the largest and longest serving partners of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), LWF works in almost 30 countries around the world to support refugees, returnees, internally displaced people (IDPs), their host communities, and communities at risk.

According to UNHCR, the number of forcibly displaced people by the end of 2017 had reached 68.5 million people. By the end of 2022, this figure had increased to 108.4 million people, the highest ever recorded.

LWF faces complex and challenging environments globally and locally. Amid new

crises such as the war in Ukraine, protracted conflicts continue to affect several countries including Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Myanmar, Somalia and South Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, among others. Almost all of these countries have also suffered from significant climate related disasters. The impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable communities is yet to be fully measured: vulnerable communities worldwide faced loss of livelihoods with no safety nets, while health restrictions impacted humanitarian access and civil society space in many countries. It is against this background that the LWF has been providing direct humanitarian assistance to approximately 3 million people each year. These complex situations often necessitate a “triple nexus” response – a term which signals that relief, development and peace are interconnected in humanitarian response.

LWF has opened new operations in Ukraine and Poland, as well as in Syria. LWF had been responding to the needs of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries for years in the face of the decade-long war in the country. In 2019, we shifted our approach by working through local partners inside the country. LWF’s faith-based implementing partners, Caritas Syria in Aleppo and Ephrem Patriarchal Development Committee (EPDC) in rural Damascus provide a range of quality services including food, protection, psychosocial support and education. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch (GOPA), through its affiliate Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development (DERD), and the Syriac Orthodox Church, through EPDC, are among key LWF partners who provide support. When devastating earthquakes struck Turkey and Syria in 2023, LWF responded with these local faith-based partners in Damascus and Aleppo, relying on support from our global network of churches and related agencies.

LWF has also scaled up its emergency response to meet emerging needs in several countries. Our work has expanded in Colombia to assist Venezuelan refugees. The situation is similar for the Congolese and South Sudanese refugee crises affecting Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. In Bangladesh, LWF is supporting its

former country program RDRS Bangladesh for the massive influx of Rohingya refugees into the country. Emergency response continues in Myanmar, Iraq, Jordan, Somalia and Chad.

Recurrent intercommunal conflicts continue to destabilize parts of South Sudan despite efforts to foster peace, 12 years after the country attained independence from its northern neighbor Sudan. The regional response in East Africa to the movement of South Sudanese people continued, particularly along the border of South Sudan and Uganda and Kenya. LWF opened a new field office in Magwi, Eastern Equatoria State to support local authorities and communities in welcoming and reintegrating returnees from neighboring Uganda. Out of the 752,000 South Sudanese who fled into Uganda in 2017, the LWF took care of 350,000, providing water and sanitation facilities, shelter, programs to support livelihoods and protection services those who are more vulnerable like unaccompanied and separated children, the elderly, pregnant women and young mothers. By 2022, the LWF was hosting more than half a million South Sudanese, and another 200,000 Congolese fleeing internal conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The situation was similar in Cameroon where LWF has provided services between 2016-2021 to over 200,000 people fleeing Nigeria’s Boko Haram insurgency and the lasting internal conflict in the Central African Republic. LWF managed the Minawao camp for Nigerian refugees in the very insecure extreme North of the country and worked in several camps

## AN ESCALATING CRISIS

**The crisis, which broke out in Sudan in mid-April 2023, has also deteriorated dramatically due to the conflict between two warring factions vying for power. By late May 1 million people are reported to have fled their homes. The LWF responded to the crisis in the Sudanese border areas of Chad and South Sudan and called for donations to support that work.**

for refugees from CAR in Eastern Cameroon. LWF implemented over a dozen projects in the country including installing water and sanitation infrastructures, supporting refugees children formal education, and providing professional training, support to farmers, and income-generating activities. Furthermore, LWF contributed to environmental and climate resilience programming in this semi-arid zone by planting over 50,000 trees, through the “Making Minawao Green Again” project, contributing to the construction of the Sahel Green Belt initiative.

The Colombia program celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022. The movement of Venezuelan refugees and IDPs on both sides of the border between Venezuela and Colombia became a central focus for the program in 2019, which has since then been called the LWF Colombia-Venezuela program, reflecting the sub-regional nature of the crisis it responds to.

The resurgence of violence in Myanmar in 2017 forced over 700,000 Rohingya people to flee into neighboring Bangladesh. In 2019, LWF established collaboration with its former country program RDRS Bangladesh and continues to provide assistance to tens of thousands of people who have settled at the Cox’s Bazar refugee camp. The intervention, which benefits both refugees and host communities promotes food security and environmental protection, ensures access to water and hygiene kits to improve quality of life, and fosters economic and civic empowerment. With the escalation of widespread violence in Myanmar following the military coup in 2021, and subsequent natural disasters, LWF has continued to grow its humanitarian response to meet the mounting needs of the population in the country itself.

The climate crisis has also increased the recurrence of tropical storms and prolonged drought. When central Mozambique was hit by the deadly tropical cyclone Idai in 2019, flooding in the Dombé region caused over 600 deaths and washed away houses, crops, and livestock, and destroyed infrastructure. LWF provided emergency shelter, rehabilitated water pumps and bore holes and supported the affected communities to advocate for their right to service delivery from the local authorities.

In Honduras’ northern regions of Chamelecón and El Calan flooding from two successive hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020 destroyed homes, bridges, roads, and crops. The LWF country program there and the Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras provided shelter to people who lost their houses and belongings. Recovery takes long after such disasters: “The most dangerous places to live, near rivers for example, are where the poorest people live, so it is the poorest who are the most affected by the flooding. The damage they have suffered is immense, and it compounds existing poverty and social problems,” remarked the church’s pastor Rev. Julio Caballero.

When Chad experienced unprecedented flooding in 2022, displacing hundreds of thousands of people and causing significant damage, LWF’s emergency response comprising hygiene and sanitation focused on N’Djamena and the city’s surroundings. More recently, with the sudden breakout of civil war and ethnic cleansing in Sudan, the LWF Chad programme has scaled up its response to the refugees fleeing Darfur and other parts of Sudan into the country. The environment is extremely harsh, with day temperatures well over 40 degrees, and work has focused on providing water and sanitation facilities, hygiene consumables and education, household NFI and shelter.

Between 2018 and 2023, Ethiopia faced multiple crises: a prolonged drought affecting 24.1 million people, a year long struggle against swarms of desert locusts, and conflict in the northern region of Tigray that turned violent toward the end of 2020, killing more than half a million people and displacing over 5 million others. Other ethnic conflicts continue in multiple regions of the country. In the Bale zone alone, where locusts destroyed more than 20,300 hectares of grazing land, farmland, and forests, LWF assisted 3,000 households, with improved seeds, food for livestock, and cash assistance to recover their livelihoods. Together with its member church, the EECMY, LWF provided cash transfers, food, shelter, relief goods, water and sanitation to tens of thousands of people affected by the war. At the Seba Kare IDP camp near Mekelle, for example, LWF constructed a water supply





**A Ukrainian refugee child is offered some sweets by an aid worker upon arriving in Hungary. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert**

system making potable water accessible to almost 11,000 internally displaced people and host community members.

## WORKING TOGETHER IN RESPONSE TO THE INVASION OF UKRAINE

LWF reacted immediately to the refugee situation following Russia's invasion of Ukraine at the end of February 2022. Within ten days, the LWF had deployed an inter-departmental team to assess its potential response through member churches in the neighboring countries of Poland, Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary. The "One LWF" approach to such a large-scale crisis was unprecedented. It involved close

cooperation between World Service, all other departments and member churches in the region. Dedicated staff was assigned to work on the response which shifted attention from other country programs and operations.

Following an assessment that involved the member churches in the region, LWF opened country programs in Poland and Ukraine and increased its support toward diaconal services offered by member churches in the region.

With the establishment of a separately registered foundation in Poland, food and non-food distributions on both sides of the Polish-Ukrainian border began almost immediately, and a multi-purpose cash assistance program with UNHCR was established.

With the support from Act Church of Sweden roster members, LWF in Poland organized

## THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

The war in Ukraine has had an impact well beyond the borders of Europe. Like the member churches, all LWF country programs have been affected. The cost of goods for projects has risen sharply, especially for landlocked countries which rely on imported commodities. For example, the unit cost to treat a malnourished child in the Central African Republic has doubled. Equally, in many countries the cost of cereal or seeds, a bag of fertilizer or cement, and fuel.

The low levels of supplies, compounded by high demand and additional taxes, limits the number of people who can receive support. Programs have revised budgets, staff numbers, and essential program needs, and some projects may require scaling down or closure.

The Ukraine war has diverted global attention from protracted crises and rising poverty in every country in which the LWF operates, and so securing new grants and maintaining current funding is challenging. Together with the dramatic rise in operational costs, it is critical to shift the world's attention back to these countries now.

trainings on community-based psychosocial support to approximately 60 staff members. Refugees, mainly women with children were enrolled in trauma healing sessions, child friendly spaces were set up, Polish language classes proved to be an effective method for social integration and special attention was paid to disability inclusion. The response has been significant; LWF partners and member churches to this day contributed more than EUR 20 million to aid the people and churches of Ukraine. The work is supported by humanitarian partners like UNHCR, ecumenical partners like the ACT Alliance, and member churches and related agencies, like ELCA, Act Church of Sweden and others.

Holistic and coordinated humanitarian and diaconal work is being offered to Ukrainian refugees who have fled to Poland and neighboring countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovak Republic, and further in Estonia. In addition, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine and LWF Ukraine are providing humanitarian aid to people who are affected by the war in several hard-hit areas inside Ukraine.

After first responding in the region of Chernihiv in Northern Ukraine, where the Ukrainian government regained control in June 2023, LWF opened an office in Kharkiv and shifted humanitarian work toward the frontline city, located only 40 kilometers from the border with the Russian Federation. LWF equipped

five heating points in the city, where people could warm up during the cold season, find water and electricity after the destruction of the city's infrastructure, and have a hot meal. Support is now expanding to repairing damaged homes, supplying relief goods, and providing psychosocial support and care for traumatized people. To support localization efforts, LWF provides assistance to a local relief structure which coordinates over 300 volunteer organizations in Kharkiv Oblast.

On the war's first anniversary LWF produced a publication, *Together: LWF responds to the war in Ukraine* showcasing the extensive work of LWF member churches and two new country programs in Poland and Ukraine.

## BUILDING RESILIENT AND EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES

LWF adopts a rights-based approach to build resilient communities throughout humanitarian assistance, recovery, development and peacebuilding phases, acknowledging that these phases can exist simultaneously or quickly change from one to the other. The World Service strategy calls for programmatic work to be implemented at three levels: individual (focusing on a person's situation),

community (drawing on collective strength), and institutional (advocating for change). Institutional capacity building is part of this implementation. This strategic approach places working with local communities, member churches and related agencies at the core of LWF's approach to supporting sustainable development. This is done in three key programmatic areas: livelihoods, quality services, and protection and social cohesion.

## LIVELIHOODS

Encouraged and guided by the Twelfth Assembly, our work continued to make individuals and communities more resilient and economically self-reliant by helping them acquire skills, tools, and networks to sustain their lives and recover from shocks.

Through projects in agriculture and vocational training, families in several regions were supported to meet basic needs, send children to school, access health care, and save for the future. This was the case in the Central America region, Ethiopia, and countries in East and Central Africa, where refugees and host communities affected by climate change became less dependent on aid. In our work around the world, we apply a wide range of approaches to the local challenges. We foster more productive, climate-smart agriculture. We help artisans connect with markets. We empower youth to get jobs through vocational and life skills training and job placement (including as part of LWF staff). We fight land grabbing and secure access to land. We leverage women's entrepreneurial talent by facilitating their access to credit and business know-how. In 2022 for example, close to 10'000 individuals had access to new income-



House construction in Beldangi refugee camp, Nepal. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert





## SAVING LIVES AT THE AUGUSTA VICTORIA HOSPITAL

One of LWF's largest projects is the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem. The center of medical excellence serving 5 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, has become the main cancer referral center, providing comprehensive and integrated services for cancer patients from the region, while paying attention not only to the medical aspects but also to social, economic, and mental health needs.

This work is accomplished in a challenging political context due to the Israeli occupation. The difficulties which LWF confronts in Jerusalem and the surrounding area include the walls which have been built to prohibit freedom of movement and which impede access to services such as health.

Children are one of the largest groups of patients receiving specialized treatment for cancer at AVH. Taking advantage of its recently renovated pediatric palliative ward, the hospital integrates medical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of patient care and offers a support system for patients and their families.

AVH's Mobile Mammography Unit has increased its outreach. By 2017, the unit

was catering to approximately 9,700 women annually and conducting about 30 percent of the total mammograms in Palestine. By 2022, the clinic had integrated the Pink October campaign which reached more than 2,360 women in 31 locations across the West Bank, including women from urban, rural, refugee, and Bedouin communities. In October 2022 AVH conducted Pink October activities in Gaza for the first time.

A mobile diabetic clinic ensures screening for non-diabetics and holistic diabetes care for patients including foot screening and retinal screening.

"Thanks to those screenings, 206 patients were saved from an eventual amputation, and 136 persons [with disabilities] were also able to receive screenings," said Dr El Din, head of the Community Outreach Program at AVH.

On 15 July 2022, United States President Joe Biden visited the Augusta Victoria Hospital during a trip to Israel and the Palestinian territories. During this first visit of a sitting US president to the eastern part of the city, Biden announced a multi-year commitment toward the East Jerusalem Hospital Network of which AVH is a member.

*Photo: AVH/Arine Rinawi*

generating sources, and over 17'000 reported increased income thanks to LWF intervention, whilst close to 3'300 women could organize themselves in women's loans and savings groups.

In Myanmar's southeastern state of Kayin, LWF has trained farmers in new planting techniques that produce higher yields. The new techniques also use organic methods, thus freeing farmers from the endless cycle of debt resulting from purchasing agrichemicals. This process also reduces methane emissions. Self-reliance groups in the program allow space for farmers to take on more active roles. In parallel, an online forum is in place to foster horizontal networking among farmers.

In Burundi LWF is supporting returnees who fled to Tanzania because of violence in their home country. After years living as refugees, many returned to impoverished areas. The host communities are not equipped to meet these people's needs or integrate them locally. LWF's support includes advocating for women-headed households to be allocated plots of land to cultivate. Both the host community and returnees receive seeds, basic tools, and agricultural training. In addition, an emergency food voucher system ensures that returnees have enough to eat until their first harvest.

During his 2018 visit to Nepal, General Secretary Junge met local community members supported by the LWF following the devastating impact of the 2015 earthquake. "The LWF goes where no one else goes and the LWF goes to people who others hardly meet," he said after meeting families in Kavre district, where more than 380 households had received assistance to recover their livelihoods and secure improved and safe houses.

In Iraq, LWF joined the PROSPECTS initiative, which brings together the International Labor Organization (ILO), the UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation. The program provides work opportunities for women and men in refugee settlements or displacement camps, as well as their host communities who often have their own economic challenges in areas that

have been transformed by large movements of people. It includes business training and loans to start or develop own enterprises.

## QUALITY SERVICES

When state actors and local authorities are unable to provide basic services, LWF steps in to support communities in need. We provide access to quality services such as safe drinking water; sanitation and hygiene; health and nutrition; education; energy; shelter and essential household items. In many countries we work in, basic services are not prioritized or local structures are incapable of providing basic service. Our expertise in these sectors has been recognized by partners.

The security, social, political and economic context in Haiti has been in a critical state for a number of years and has been deteriorating. Urban criminality, frequent kidnapping cases, rape, civil unrest and exponential inflation have eroded the fabric of society. Thanks to the proximity to communities and local partners and working in a joint office with Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and the German Protestant relief agency Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH), LWF has been able to continue working, nevertheless. This includes upgrading of hand pumps into solar-powered water pumps, bringing water to over 2,000 families in the commune of Jérémie, and the rehabilitation of water supply systems serving another five communities in Leon town. Hurricane and earthquake-resistant houses built with LWF's support following the 2010 earthquake and a hurricane in 2016 withstood the 2021 earthquake, and more have been built in response to subsequent disasters. At Ecole Lespwa (creole for "School of Hope") a new LWF initiative to transform compost latrines into flush toilets will create a more hygienic environment for the 320 students from the surrounding communities. Named the "Green School" the project will make 400 liters of potable water available daily for the school, making it possible to provide free drinking water and even cook meals for the children, who walk up to two hours to get to school.

LWF provides education in the Kenyan refugee camps Kakuma and Dadaab, where around 100,000 children learn in LWF-run schools. Ensuring all children are included is a key objective. LWF guarantees that children with disabilities have access to improved, equitable, and inclusive learning opportunities and that they benefit from increased child protection services. Parents, guardians, school management, students, and other education partners are involved in seeking solutions to the challenges these children face every day. In addition, the LWF is building awareness in the community about the rights and capabilities of children with special needs. LWF also trains teachers and supports the students with psychosocial counselling and cash grants. During the COVID-19 lock-down, LWF partnered with a local radio station near Kakuma refugee camp for remote classes and purchased radios for girls and vulnerable students to ensure children could still access education remotely.

LWF-managed schools and temporary learning spaces catered to more than 300,000 children in Kenya, Myanmar and South Sudan. In Jordan, LWF renovated over 100 schools and trained teachers in more than 175 schools to ensure inclusive learning environments for all, including Syrian, Iraqi and other refugee children.

## PROTECTION AND SOCIAL COHESION

The people we serve are among the most vulnerable. For many of them, life as they know it has been uprooted by conflict or natural disaster. Routines and structures have disappeared or do not apply anymore. Roles have changed. Others belong to

“We will build on grassroots experience and knowledge to bring local human rights issues and realities to the global arena.”

— *LWF World Service Global Strategy 2019–2024*

marginalized communities, with less access to basic services. These situations often affect disproportionately already vulnerable groups such as children, women and girls, the elderly, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. They are in particular danger of exploitation and abuse. For this reason, our work around the world inherently includes elements to protect and foster social cohesion. Our approach includes and promotes the role of traditional leaders and faith communities to ensure that the protection mechanisms are lasting and accepted by all. We partner with communities, local organizations and authorities to raise awareness about people’s needs and protect those most at risk. We believe in the strength of the community, and work wherever possible with existing structures to promote these capacities.

In 2022, World Service developed two practical guidelines: a Child Protection Guideline and Toolkit and Child Safeguarding Guidelines and Toolkit in its commitment to strengthen country program capacities to end all forms of violence against children. More than 100 staff across LWF country programs participated in a series of nine workshops to validate and become familiar with the guidelines and toolkits including a dedicated platform to communicate LWF’s zero-tolerance policy toward child violence, exploitation and abuse.

## A LOCAL TO GLOBAL RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

LWF applies a rights-based approach (RBA) in its work at community level by raising the voice of local communities at the global level and bringing back results of global advocacy to the ground (L2GL). RBA is applied in all phases of our work, from humanitarian to development, across the three priority areas, supporting local communities to defend and access their rights.

The RBA perspective in humanitarian assistance acknowledges that fostering peace through a human rights focus begins



## CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

In Haiti, LWF supports several schools in rural areas with water and sanitation infrastructure. The schools provide stability that children often lack otherwise. "At home, the children experience stress, maybe even violence. Most of them have had a family member killed or kidnapped. They lose their friends because many leave the country," said Naomie Beaujour, LWF program manager. Because of social insecurity there is a lack of cultural activities like movies, theatres or youth clubs.

While this work makes a difference in the countryside, in the city, school is no longer safe. In January 2023 schoolchildren demonstrated in Port-au-Prince following a gang kidnapping of a teacher and six students. Many parents are afraid to let their children walk alone in the street, and they cannot afford the bus tickets.

"Education is hope, and that's the most important thing we can give to the children. How can they grow if they do not go to school?" Beaujour asks.

In Nepal, much of LWF's work focuses on communities affected by caste-based discrimination and systematic violation of rights, such as the Dalits, freed-Haliyas (former bonded laborers, Santhal and Musahar communities. LWF provided education on legal issues, human rights and leadership development to empower female leaders. In a human rights approach, duty bearers refer mainly to governments and other institutions, and individuals responsible for protecting, respecting, promoting and realizing human rights and ensuring that such rights are not violated. Through its partners, LWF has strengthened the capacity of local organizations to generate evidence and

organize advocacy to claim their rights and hold duty bearers accountable. Community-led actions have resulted in local duty bearers taking positive measures such as allocating important resources to build safe shelters for 110 households, a community health center, and multipurpose community buildings for Santhals.

Having escaped the civil war in South Sudan, young refugees in northern Uganda have seen death, violence, and loss. Many are traumatized, which impacts on their lives in the settlement, and their prospects for the future. LWF started a pilot project of mental health retreats with ten groups of teenagers in Palorinya, Adjumani, Lamwo, and Kyangwali refugee settlements in 2020. The program combined recreational activities, therapeutic exercises, and life skills, conflict resolution training, relaxation exercises, and various sports and art activities. *"Supporting children and youth affected by conflict and trauma to reflect on their life experiences is an important step toward healing, emotional well-being and nurturing resilient, peaceful, and productive individuals and communities."* says Patrick Kyeyune Kafuuma, Psychosocial Officer in the LWF Uganda program.

At the Kakuma Refugee camp in northern Kenya, home to people fleeing recurring conflict in Eritrea, DRC, Somalia and South Sudan, LWF's work includes nurturing young talents and promoting cultural diversity. Through the annual Kakuma Got Talent festival, youth at the camp and neighboring Kalobeyei Settlement get a chance to demonstrate their diverse music, dance and drama talents, and inspire each other toward hope and opportunities for growth. The Kakuma Premier League soccer teams, gives young men and women a chance to develop talents in arts and sports and sometimes even secure a new life outside the camp.

during emergencies and should not be left to the development phase alone. The focus therefore is to strengthen the capacity of local and national civil society organizations

and duty bearers as key actors in building strong societies and to promote International Humanitarian Law in conflict situations.



**In April 2022, LWF General Secretary Burghardt visited the World Service program in Uganda. This was her first visit to a country program since taking office and it offered an opportunity to take stock of decades of LWF’s work with refugees and host communities. The Uganda operation is the largest program in terms of number of people served, estimated at over 700,000—including more than half a million South Sudanese refugees in the north, and some 200,000 Congolese refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the west. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert**

In 2018 and 2021, LWF renewed its RBA project portfolio particularly in the East and Horn of Africa, Angola, Chad, Mozambique and Myanmar and began engaging in new countries like Burundi and Jordan with a focus on women’s rights. LWF works to uphold the rights of refugees and displaced persons, rights of marginalized communities, as well as the rights of women and children.

In Chad, LWF and partners engaged key national level duty bearers regarding the adoption of the asylum law. A national consultation workshop was held to share recommendations from refugees, returnees, and nationals. The

adoption of the Asylum law by the Parliament in December 2020 is an important landmark toward protection of refugees’ human rights and an achievement after extensive advocacy by civil society in the past few years. LWF and its partners are now working on the dissemination of this new law and on the follow-up of its implementation on the ground.

In Angola, LWF has worked with communities so they could secure their access to land and protect their livelihoods. Community Development Committees in Angola are now recognized as municipal human rights commissions by authorities, resulting in their

reports being channelled to ministries in the capital city. As a result, the government was able to take action to respond to communities' claims, for example, organizing civil registry campaigns in Moxico Province.

In Colombia, LWF supported the Guardians of the Atrato, with members from seven indigenous and afro-Colombian organizations, who are meant to protect and defend the Atrato river in the department of Choco. The communities living along the Atrato have been affected by decades of conflict, displacement, as well as on-going destruction of their environment and traditional livelihoods, due to illegal mining in the river. The Guardians of the Atrato as well as the local indigenous and Afro-Colombian organizations have engaged in a legal battle to protect their environment and their right to sustainable and dignified livelihoods.

When LWF Colombia celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022, coinciding with the International Day of Peace on, this was testimony of the dedicated service to accompanying populations trying to rebuild their lives after decades of armed conflict and its impact.

“Our commitment to peace focuses on respecting and working with the communities with the highest rates of poverty in the country and those most affected by the internal conflict, reaching the most remote places directly, building trust to work hand in hand with local partner organizations,” (Adriana Franco Chitanana, former LWF Representative for Colombia and Venezuela)

## EDUCATION, SKILLS TRAINING TO EMPOWER WOMEN

Gender justice is one of the core values and principles of LWF's work. Since the last assembly, we have continued to analyze how the systems and tools developed continue to ensure inclusive and equal working environments and improved capacity for

gender responsive programming and advocacy. The country programs in Nepal and Guatemala, have adapted the LWF Gender Justice Policy to their own policies that take into account the local context, whereas the work in places like Myanmar, Kenya and Somalia, is guided by specific action plans based on the global LWF policy document.

In Mozambique, LWF works with its local partners to advance the rights of girls and women especially concerning education and protection from early marriage. In Buzi and Chibabava districts in Sofala province, 10 girls benefitted from school materials and scholarships to prevent them from dropping out of school, and manuals on a new law criminalizing child marriage were distributed to 23 schools in 2020. In addition, 312 women are now able to read and write, thanks to literacy classes under the LWF program. Adult education centers or girls' clubs have been key in raising awareness on girls' rights, along with radio programs, including topics such as Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) during the COVID-19 period.

Several country programs including Burundi, Myanmar and Palestine are implementing projects to empower women to claim their socio-economic rights. In 2019 in Palestine, LWF with support from partner Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) started a new initiative called GRIT (Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Technical and Vocational Education and Training) in the Palestinian territories, where unemployment is a main cause of poverty, and women have fewer opportunities than men to find work. GRIT improves women's access to training that suits their needs, interests and market demands. It “will open new doors for these women, providing greater economic freedom and confidence within their families and communities,” said Suhad Kasbari, the LWF GRIT project manager.

Since the last Assembly, various in-country capacity-building events have been organized. In October 2021, LWF launched the online Gender Responsive Programming course on the FABO training platform, by June 2023, more than 350 staff across LWF country programs, had completed the course. In July



## ADVOCATES OF EQUAL PAY

Daw Moe lives in a rural village of Kayin State, Myanmar, where her family of four including two small children, used to depend on her husband's small monthly income of EUR 100.

Through RBA training, Moe has developed skills in leadership, small business management, and increased her knowledge on women's rights. The family also gained practical skills on keeping goats, pigs, and chickens, and now has a climate-smart sesame seed crop from which they earned EUR 1,250.

The knowledge and experience she learnt with LWF have helped Moe establish trust

and admiration among her peers, and she is now a volunteer for education in her village, where she creates awareness about gender equality and community development. Actively involved in the Village Development Committee, she has risen through the ranks from accountant to vice-chairperson, and her self-confidence has grown too as she leads community events and represents the village at meetings with the authorities.

"We've learned a lot as women [...] I feel so much more confident now. In my village, we work a lot on rice harvesting and men were always paid more than women for the same work. In 2019 the women successfully raised this concern and advocated for equal pay. Now both women and men are paid equally."

2023, we finalized *A Gender Justice Toolbox* that will provide country programs and member churches with necessary tools to implement the *LWF Gender Justice Policy*.

## STRONGER ACTION FOR JUSTICE

In its global strategy, the LWF cites the importance of defending human rights and commits to building on its unique ability to bring insights from the grass roots to the international level. It has responded with creativity and commitment in its advocacy for the increasing numbers of vulnerable people subjected to human rights abuses especially through violence and poverty.

At the national level, member churches are involved in civil society networks, interfaith collaboration and advocacy activities that hold governments accountable toward citizens. In countries where World Service is present, the respective LWF country or emergency program supports implementation on the ground.

## ADVOCATING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

LWF's accreditation to the UN facilitates strategic engagement with bodies such as the Human Rights Council (HRC) and its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism that holds governments accountable for improving human rights situations on the ground. Member churches and communities served by the country programs can participate in UN processes by sharing concerns from their contexts. This connection to local communities and to the UN offices in Geneva, New York, Nairobi and Bonn, allows the LWF to bring the voices of those who are seldom heard, to the global arena.

In 2018, LWF organized a UPR capacity-building workshop for civil society organizations (CSOs) in Luanda, Angola, on land rights and how to collect human rights data. Participants were introduced to the UN human rights mechanisms and to LWF's *local to global to local* methodology which emphasizes the empowerment of local people and communities as key actors in determining their own future. Member churches in Guatemala, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Namibia, Nigeria, Peru, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, among others, have submitted reports on how their

respective governments implement the UPR recommendations in the past six years.

LWF also supported CSOs from its country program work in Nepal and Mozambique to collect information and submit reports to the HRC in 2020. This accompaniment continued during the COVID-19 lockdowns, with organizations presenting their findings and lobbying diplomatic missions through online processes.

As part of its refugee advocacy work, LWF participates in the Global Compact on Refugees, a series of UN meetings aimed at strengthening the international response to large movements of refugees and protracted situations. In June 2018, Rose Nathike, a young South Sudanese 800-meter Olympian living in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya, delivered a statement at the consultation on behalf of

LWF and International Council of Voluntary Associations. “When our voices are heard and our priorities are taken into account in global policy-making processes, refugees will thrive and contribute socially and economically to the development of their host countries as we already see in some places,” she said.

Concerns of Palestinian parents with sick children were heard at the 43<sup>rd</sup> HRC in 2020. At an LWF-organized side event, stories were shared about the challenges Palestinian parents face when trying to obtain travel permits from Israeli security to access treatment for their children at AVH in East Jerusalem. Speakers at the event called upon the international community to ensure that all Palestinian children are treated without delay and travel restrictions, and that all children referred for medical treatment outside Gaza should be accompanied by at least one parent.



**South Sudanese refugee Rose Nathike Lokonyen at the Global Compact on Refugees consultation in Geneva.  
Photo: LWF/ Peter Kenny**



**Panel at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, New York, 2023. Photo: Roy Anthony Morrison**

During the same session, the LWF delivered oral statements on the need for a dedicated Special Rapporteur on climate change, and on human rights in Angola including the rights of women, children, minority groups, and refugees. The LWF spoke out as well against SGBV.

**STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY FOR GENDER JUSTICE**

Nearly 60 delegates from faith-based organizations (FBOs) around the world met online in September 2021 for the annual training on advocacy for women’s human rights that focused on networking and collaboration at the local and regional levels. Topics included how to design and facilitate training at the regional and country levels, tools for gender justice advocacy, how to report on human

rights in different contexts, and the role of FBOs in gender justice advocacy. The LWF is one of seven organizations that have been partnering in the joint venture since 2015. Between 2017 and 2022, more than 270 men and women, including over 60 representatives from LWF member churches and country programs had completed the training.

Work continued in 2023 with a 32-member LWF delegation participating in online and in-person discussions at the 67<sup>th</sup> UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York. The focus was on the use of technology to work for gender justice in both local and global contexts. One of the participants, Laura Chacón Gonzales, communications and advocacy coordinator for LWF in Colombia noted that digital violence “is not an isolated phenomenon, but part of a social context of gender discrimination and systemic violence.” She said women human



rights defenders are regularly targeted online by people seeking to silence them and to intimidate those they are seeking to protect.

At the 53<sup>rd</sup> HRC session in June, the LWF focused its advocacy on four main areas: gender justice and the human rights of women and girls, and in particular addressing gender-based violence; human rights in the context of climate change; and evaluation of human rights performance of Argentina, Guatemala and Peru under the UPR mechanism. In addition, the LWF in collaboration with faith based and civil society actors advocated for the rights of Dalits through an event co-organized with the International Dalit Solidarity Network. At this HRC session the LWF was part of a global network of civil society actors calling for a new mechanism to monitor and address incidences of death, disappearance and violation of human rights of asylum seekers, migrants and refugees at international borders.

Each year, churches around the world are invited to take action in activities that promote the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence UN campaign. The 2020 theme “Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect” shone a spotlight on the urgent need to invest in more effective prevention and response initiatives: LWF’s campaign offered online material for Bible studies and worship as well as visibility materials to call for gender justice.

## LEADING INITIATIVES FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

Youth leadership on climate change is a key LWF approach at the local, regional, and global levels when it comes to issues related to the climate crisis.

In addition to advocacy at the HRC, LWF’s delegation to the annual Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is mostly made up of youth representing all LWF regions. At the 23<sup>rd</sup> COP in Bonn, Germany in 2017, ten young Lutherans from around the world joined with the World Council of Churches and ACT Alliance to issue a call for action to protect the

most vulnerable people. The climate activists at COP 24 in Katowice, Poland, in 2018, came from LWF member churches in Argentina, Germany, Iceland, Indonesia, Poland, South Africa, and the United States.

At COP 25 in Madrid, Spain in 2019, LWF youth joined ecumenical partners to declare “Creation is not for sale,” and illustrate the lack of balance in financing the global climate response where very little financing goes into covering loss and damage. For COP 26 in Glasgow, UK, the LWF registered its biggest ever delegation with 32 young Lutherans taking part mostly online due to COVID-19 restrictions. In 2022, LWF youth continued to focus on climate justice and participated in COP 27 in Egypt.

LWF collaborates with other global actors to advocate for religion’s contribution to sustainable development. In 2018 the General Secretary Junge moderated a panel discussion with representatives of governments, the UN and FBOs, at an event hosted by Denmark’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the general assembly of the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development in Copenhagen. Discussion focused on maximizing the input and impact of religions in the question of sustainable development. On World Refugee Day in 2022, LWF joined IRW and the Jewish humanitarian organization, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) to co-host an international conference “Welcoming the Stranger, Shaping the Future” of faith actors in refugee response.

“Promoting climate justice by amplifying the voices of communities affected by climate change impacts through theologically grounded and human rights-based advocacy, mobilization, campaigns, and action at local, national, and global levels.”  
– *LWF Advocacy Framework*



**Demonstration during COP26 in Glasgow, United Kingdom, in 2021. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert**

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, LWF in collaboration with other FBOs increased advocacy for vaccine access for the most vulnerable people in low-income countries and for international debt relief. In 2020, LWF joined NIFEA partner ecumenical organizations in urging the G20 forum of the world's biggest economies to provide much needed debt relief for countries struggling to cope with the pandemic. Throughout that year, the LWF worked closely with UNHCR and later with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to emphasize multi-stakeholder collaboration in complex political contexts when it comes to protecting refugees including children. In 2021, the COVID-19 advocacy with ecumenical and civil society partners focused on protection of the most vulnerable communities and on vaccine equity.

## EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY AND CALLING FOR JUSTICE

LWF expresses solidarity through prayers, statements, and other forms of accompaniment when natural and human-made disasters affect member churches and the countries in which they offer their witness. Below are some examples of this.

In the wake of the attacks on the Strasbourg Marché de Noël (Christmas Market) in France on 12 December 2018, the LWF issued a statement condemning the "senseless acts of violence" and declaring that the communion stood in solidarity with the people of Strasbourg. Following the mass shootings in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019, the LWF expressed its concern in a letter from the General Secretary to the

Lutheran Church in Australia and the Lutheran Church of New Zealand. “Places of worship and prayer should be safe spaces, where people can feel hope, not fear,” General Secretary Junge said and urged followers of different religions to come together to work for peace, justice, and respect for human life. A month later the LWF sent a message of compassionate concern to those affected by attacks targeting Christian places of worship and hotels in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, in which over 350 people were killed and hundreds more injured. The LWF President and General Secretary issued a joint statement in the wake of the attacks, expressing the communion’s solidarity with all those affected.

As a member of the Global Pray and Action Chain for Climate Justice, the LWF hosted an online prayer service on 22 November 2020. Faith actors and ecumenical partners encouraged participants to pray and act for climate justice in the year before COP26.

Rev. Gilberto Quesada Mora, president of the Lutheran Costa Rican Church, pointed to the devastation caused by hurricanes Eta and Iota in Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, and said, “Our prayer unites and generates real changes in our contexts.”

From the end of 2020 to 2022, armed conflict devastated Tigray region in Ethiopia, which cost lives of thousands of local people. Shortly after assuming office, General Secretary Burghardt sent a pastoral letter to the President of one of LWF’s largest member churches, EECMY, saying in her letter: “Our hearts go out specifically to the most vulnerable, whose lives and livelihoods have been hit the hardest”.

Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the LWF issued a number of statements and social media posts, condemning the Russian invasion. General Secretary Burghardt called for prayers for just peace in Ukraine, advocacy to support those affected by the war and an immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine, and offering practical help and assistance. She also addressed the need to treat everyone fleeing Ukraine equally: “LWF calls on government officials, particularly in Ukraine and neighboring countries, as well as the European Union and its member states to ensure the protection of all fleeing the war. Racial and ethnic discrimination is a violation of human dignity, human rights, and human decency. In times of war, we must be committed to stand together, safeguard dignity, and welcome the stranger.”

## YOUTH-LED CLIMATE PROJECTS

**From 2019 to 2022, the LWF supported more than 50 small-scale youth-led climate justice projects in its member churches.**

**Youth from the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church partnered with a local fitness club in the coastal city of Mombasa for a “wake-up call for climate change.” It took shape as a climate duathlon, combining a cycle tour with a beach clean-up. The beach clean-up took up the message of the United Nations Environment Assembly about plastic pollution in the ocean. The last session in Nairobi, Kenya, adopted a historic resolution to end plastic pollution and forge**

**an international legally binding agreement by 2024.**

**In South Africa, pupils at Hermannsburg School created and managed organic gardens. The produce is used in the school’s kitchen, and some is shared with poor people in local communities. The project leader was a youth member of the Northeastern Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa.**

**“These are very encouraging examples for climate action by young people,” says Elena Cedillo, LWF Program Executive for Climate Change. “We hope to see many more in the future and welcome project proposals from all regions.”**



In 2022 when violence at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and other holy sites in Jerusalem, and clashes across Israel and Palestine broke out and violated the dignity of the affected people, the LWF urged all parties “to respect the multi-religious identity of the city and seek peaceful solutions.”

In May 2023, LWF President Musa and General Secretary Burghardt called for solidarity with the people of Sudan, after a ceasefire was brokered. “What the people of Sudan need is long-term peace and real solidarity. The international community must act decisively to help resolve the conflict and ensure the protection of the people of Sudan, including aid workers providing essential services. We condemn all forms of violence and destruction of civilian infrastructure.”

## STRENGTHENING PEACEBUILDING AND INTERFAITH COLLABORATION

Interfaith dialogue cooperation to build mutual understanding is a priority for the LWF and a daily reality for members of many of its member churches and country programs in different parts of the globe. In 2018, World Service staff worked closely with Islamic Relief Worldwide to publish a practical guide titled *A Faith Sensitive Approach in Humanitarian Response*.

Promoting peaceful, inclusive, and just societies through faith-inspired, theologically grounded, human rights-based advocacy, and interfaith collaboration at the local, national, and international levels – LWF Advocacy Framework

In December 2021, the LWF, the Faith to Action Network, and IRW facilitated a hybrid (in-person and online) session on the role of faith communities and their leaders in promoting peace and inclusive societies. Grassroots faith actors from Egypt, Palestine, and Uganda shared their experience. The event was part

of a series of consultations that explore case studies and evidence from grassroots faith initiatives to share best practices on how to build inclusive societies. In the same year, LWF collaborated with The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, alongside Finn Church Aid (FCA), who hosted consultations for faith actors serving displaced communities in Myanmar, Thailand, and India. LWF also worked closely with A World of Neighbours to advocate for greater inclusion of refugees and support for grassroots faith practitioners in refugee-hosting contexts across Europe.

Interfaith collaboration has been an important aspect of LWF’s peacebuilding work. One of the highlights last year was the conference *Welcoming the Stranger, Shaping the Future, Living as Neighbors*. This international conference took place in Geneva in June 2022 and was jointly hosted by the LWF, IRW and HIAS. Prior to the global conference, LWF supported regional *Welcoming the Stranger* consultations in Africa, Europe and LAC. Besides fulfilling this joint pledge with our partners, we followed up with an Innovation lab at the UNHCR High Commissioner’s Dialogue in December 2022. The LWF continues collaboration with IRW and HIAS in developing a pledge for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum.

This aims to improve understanding of the work done by local faith actors around the world in implementing the Global Compact on Refugees, including through core protection and peace-building. The global partners also collaborate in creating supportive environments for local actors to carry out such work and share learning and best practices that can be replicated at a greater scale.

LWF advocates for a faith-inspired approach to peacebuilding based on grass roots experiences, paying attention to the complex web of interconnected root causes of conflicts. In 2021, LWF supported the production of a video highlighting how short films can be a powerful tool in the work of interfaith peacebuilding. The video showcases two short films produced by peace activists in Iraq and Indonesia, with support from the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies. At the 2022 Geneva Peace Week gathering

of diplomats, policymakers, researchers and grassroots peace activists, LWF partnered with the Nairobi-based Faith to Action Network to produce two video interviews showcasing the work of young peacemakers who are building bridges across different faith communities in India, Indonesia, Kenya and Uganda.

In May 2023, LWF facilitated a leadership workshop with all EECMY synod presidents and other church leaders, with emphasis on peace building and dialogue.



“In order to be a sustainable and effective organization, we will continue to invest in organizational development and strategic leadership at all levels, strong financial management and resource mobilization, alignment of structures and systems, investment in people, and effective internal and external communication.”

– LWF Strategy 2019-2024



LWF staff gather during the Days of Meetings in 2019. Photo: LWF/S. Gallay



# A SUSTAINABLE AND EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION

**The LWF has successfully managed transitions and the impact of major global events since the last Assembly, including the COVID-19 pandemic and a global financial crisis, which affected the organization and all its major partners. During the period, the LWF created a new strategy as well as sub-strategies, restructured the Communion Office, elected a new General Secretary, and continued to develop new policies and ways of working.**

Strong leadership and responsible management of resources were key to organizational stability in turbulent times. As the LWF moved rapidly to respond to each transition and challenge, it tested and proved its ability to be flexible and adaptable.

## STRATEGICALLY LED AND GOVERNED

The LWF is a strategically led and managed organization. The outcomes of the Twelfth Assembly in Windhoek offered vital impetus for the development of the global communion's strategy. Approved by the LWF Council in July 2018, it guides the communion for the period 2019–2024. Building on the previous strategy, it took into account extensive analysis of the context in which the LWF and its member churches work. It was developed through an iterative process that involved members of the Council, representatives of member churches, related organizations and staff.

“The new LWF strategy helps us articulate our common purpose and sense of direction as we move forward from commemorating 500 years of reformation, listening to what God is calling us to be and do in the world,” said LWF President Musa when it was adopted. “It gives focus to what we do together as a

communion, identifying the critical importance of responding particularly to humanitarian crises, and what it means to be the church in a fragmented world.” Two strategic priorities guide the work: “Supporting churches’ presence and vibrant witness in the world” and “Promoting human dignity, justice and peace” in an overall framework of “living and working together as a communion of churches in ongoing need of reformation.”

The strategy is also a framework against which the CO reports to the Council, illustrating how it is making progress to the goals it sets. The Council has met annually, in-person and later online due to COVID-19 restrictions. In addition to the global strategies, the CO also developed sub-strategies, including its humanitarian and development work, ecumenical relations and advocacy for human rights. The World Service global strategy, *For Hope and a Future*, identifies three programmatic areas and defines a framework encompassing humanitarian and development work that puts the individuals and communities we serve at the center. That strategy was approved by the Committee for World Service in 2018.

The CO structure was reorganized in 2020 to align it better with the new strategy, as mentioned above. The new structure has a stronger focus on communion relationships, more synergy between theology, mission, and justice, and increased collaboration, to better accompany the member churches as they witness and serve together in the world. A key change was the creation of a new Department for Theology, Mission, and Justice that brings together the communion's work on theology, leadership, member church programs and advocacy. The new structure underlines the vitality of theological reflection as a foundational part of LWF's work.

In May 2020, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge announced that he would step

# 2017

August: LWF begins developing a new strategy following the Twelfth Assembly.

October: LWF marks 500<sup>th</sup> Reformation anniversary with a Reformation Day live stream of worship services from 10 countries on six continents.

October: LWF joins the Danchurch Aid online Learning Lab, with modules and training sessions on humanitarian and development topics.

October: On Reformation Day, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge leads the launch of the new *LWF Strategy 2019–2024*.

October: LWF European Communicators' Meeting in Riga, Latvia focuses on fighting manipulation and lies in post-truth society.

September: World Service organizes the first Regional Management Team Meeting for the Middle East in Amman, Jordan.

# 2019

February: Representatives of LWF member churches and related organizations gather in Geneva for the annual "Working Together" meeting.

May: World Service Global Leadership Team meets in Geneva.

June: LWF Council authorizes a new structure for the Communion Office, including the newly created Department for Theology, Mission, and Justice.

October: On Reformation Day, an online service is live streamed to mark Reformation Sunday under the theme "One Body, One Spirit, One Hope."

# 2021

March: The mid-term review of World Service Global Strategy is followed by a review of all country program strategies.

April: First meeting of the Action for Justice forums was held online to discuss the work ahead.

June: The LWF Council meets in an exceptional online meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

October: Reformation Day celebrations continue the Bible Year highlights, featuring an online service and seminar with leading scholars.

October: The human resources platform LWF People is revamped to include the LWF Onboarding space, a first-step induction for new staff.

September 2022-June 2023: LWF conducts a review of the LWF strategy with input from key stakeholders.

June: Council approves new Code of Conduct for Governance

# 2023

February: LWF publishes a revised version of its Staff Code of Conduct, with mandatory online training for all CO Office staff to ensure compliance.

June: The LWF Olive Branch Foundation (Stiftung Olivenzweig) is created in Switzerland to strengthen LWF's fundraising visibility in the country.

August: LWF Communion Office finishes preparations for Thirteenth Assembly in Kraków, Poland.

# 2018

September: The 4<sup>th</sup> Asia Communicators' Network Workshop in Manila, Philippines enhances network relationships.

May: The World Service Global Leadership Team Meeting is held in Geneva, to look at critical issues related to programmatic and managerial work.

June: The first full meeting of the LWF Council elected in Windhoek is held 27 June – 2 July in Geneva, it approves a new strategy for the communion.

June: Receiving the report of a task force appointed to assess the location of the CO, the Council decides the office will remain in Geneva.

August: The 5<sup>th</sup> LWF Asia Communicators' Network workshop is held in Malaysia, with focus on the region's identity.

October: A meeting of European communicators in Strasbourg, France explores the theme "We are not ashamed of the gospel."

March: LWF establishes two internal task forces to coordinate its COVID-19 response work with member churches and the country programs

March: Remote working from home becomes the norm in light of COVID-19. LWF enhances its IT presence to include collaboration platforms and tools.

February: At the 2020 Working Together meeting in Geneva, donors review LWF's work and identify areas for stronger collaboration.

# 2020

June: On 19 June, Council elects Estonian pastor Rev. Anne Burghardt as the next LWF General Secretary, the first woman to hold this position.

September: LWF People, an online Human Resources' platform is launched to facilitate information sharing and interaction on staff-related matters.

November: On 17 November, LWF General Secretary Rev. Anne Burghardt is installed at the Ecumenical Center Chapel.

June: "In Christ, all things hold together," is the theme of the Council meeting in Geneva, the first in-person since the pandemic.

April: At an online event, Lutheran communicators share stories, photographs, and insights about communication during crisis and conflict.

February: LWF launches a new website for its Thirteenth Assembly, offering a wide range of information on the assembly.

# 2022



## LWF STRATEGY FRAMEWORK



down from his position on 31 October 2021. He served as General Secretary from 1 November 2010, taking office after the Eleventh Assembly. “Serving as the LWF’s General Secretary has been an honor, a privilege, and an inspiring experience,” said Junge on this occasion. “I am grateful for encounters with churches globally, for trust and support by the LWF Council, leaders and colleagues, and for all the meaningful witness of The Lutheran World Federation with its passion for the church and for the world.”

The LWF Council constituted a search committee and elected Estonian theologian Rev. Anne Burghardt as the next General Secretary on 19 June 2021. “I am humbled by this great honor and deeply grateful for the confidence that the Council members have shown in me. I pray for the guidance of God’s Spirit,” said General Secretary-elect Burghardt when she was elected. She is the first woman and first theologian from Central Eastern Europe to serve as LWF General Secretary. “Rev. Burghardt will be taking up a vital role

in the leadership of our global communion of churches, helping to shape its ongoing journey and witness to the gospel, working for peace, justice, and reconciliation,” said LWF President Musa. “She brings her valuable experience and gifts into the position, and I look forward to work with her.” When she took up her new role on 1 November 2021 she said: “I pray that my work can contribute to the growing together of these churches as they gather around Jesus Christ, the one who unites us all in our mission in the world.”

## OUR WAYS OF WORKING

The LWF is a highly decentralized organization with operations in close to 30 countries on four continents. The Communion Office is located in Geneva, Switzerland, with some staff working remotely in other countries. Country and emergency programs are located in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and Europe. The advent of COVID-19 rapidly

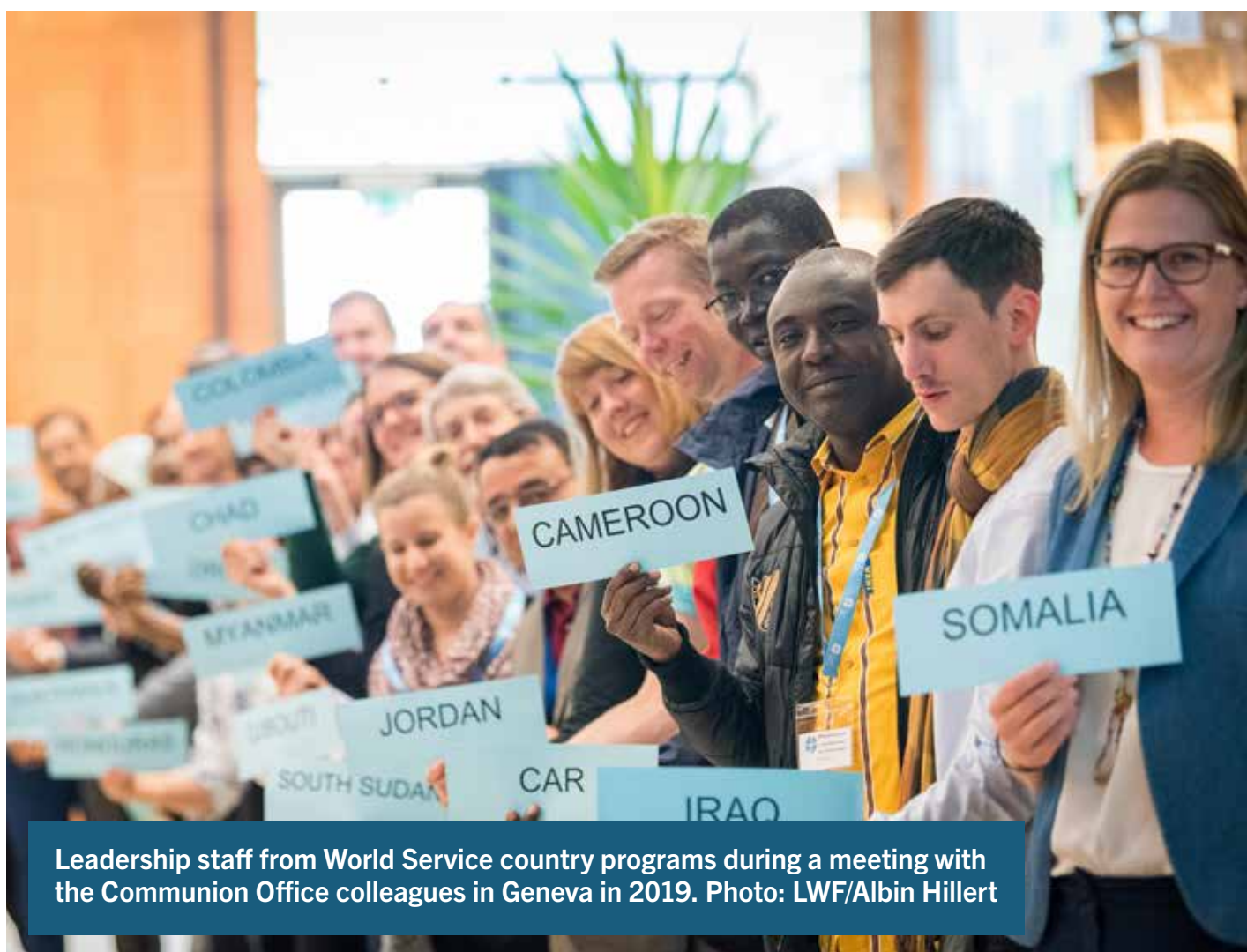
accelerated further developments in how we work together. Following the CO restructuring in 2020 more staff are located outside Geneva, including key staff like the Regional Secretaries. All of them are now placed in the regions, offering opportunities for even stronger connections to the member churches. After COVID-19, online collaboration, within the CO and with member churches and partners, has become a key way of working, with online meetings being the new normal, less use of paper and better use of online technologies. As is outlined below, the LWF introduced SharePoint and Microsoft Teams already in 2019, which meant it was well placed for online collaboration when the pandemic forced countries across the world into lockdown. Since then, CO staff have been working partly in the office and partly remotely. This has further influenced the design of an interim office space, which will be the home of the CO

from 2024 until the new Ecumenical Center has been built.

## POLICIES AND STANDARDS

The LWF is recognized as a viable and dependable partner due to its ongoing work to develop and comply with global standards for codes of conduct, safeguarding and protection for staff, incentive-based workers and volunteers, as well as members of the communities we serve.

In 2020, the process to revise the existing LWF Code of Conduct (CoC) was launched. It was approved by the Executive Committee in 2022 and became effective as of 1 February 2023. The CoC builds on the LWF constitution, its



Leadership staff from World Service country programs during a meeting with the Communion Office colleagues in Geneva in 2019. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

bylaws, LWF’s vision, mission, and values. It also draws on the commitments and expectations of stakeholders and partners with whom the LWF works in its different capacities. A new Code of Conduct for governance was also adopted, identifying areas of key importance such as conflict of interest.

The CoC clearly states that the LWF has a no-tolerance policy for harassment, abuse, and disrespectful behavior toward colleagues and other relevant stakeholders such as members of the communities we serve. Online training has been made available and it is mandatory for all staff to complete it within a given period.

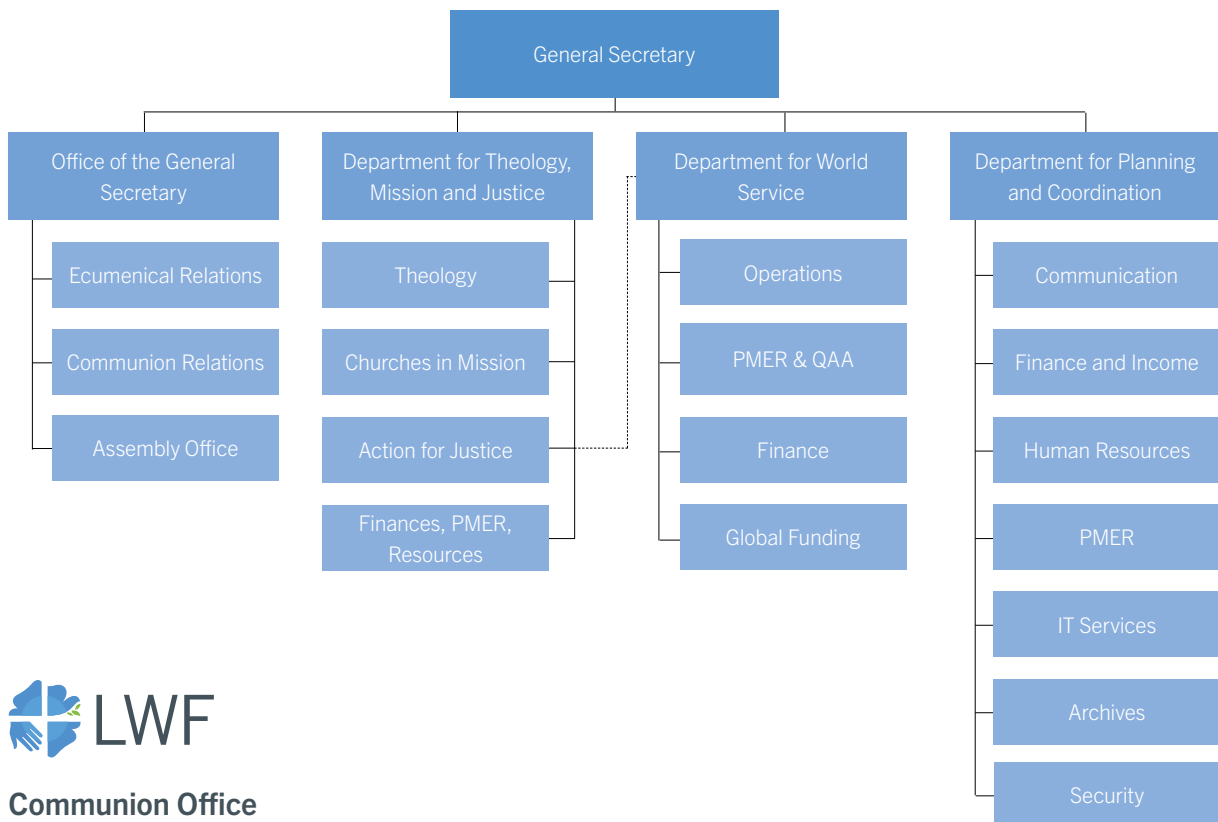
Since the Twelfth Assembly, the LWF has also revised its Personnel Regulations for International Staff and published a safe travel handbook.

In World Service, there has been an ongoing process to ensure compliance with the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and the nine commitments that organizations can and should make to people affected by crises or situations of vulnerability. As a core

standard, the CHS describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality support and assistance. Country programs have begun to undertake CHS self-assessments and draw up corresponding improvement plans, with the goal to complete this work for all of the country programs and CO by the end of 2023.

Furthermore, World Service launched a process in 2020 to ensure full compliance with the UN Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Involving Implementing Partners (PSEA). At the same time, a mandatory online safeguarding course was put in place for all the department’s staff.

In addition, since 2017, World Service has initiated, updated, or produced policy and guidelines in other areas such as safety and security, child protection and child safeguarding, and data management. A number of other policies and guidelines are currently being revisited, for example the Complaints Response Mechanism Policy and Procedures and the overall Risk Management Policy. To stop perpetrators of sexual violence moving



**Communion Office**  
February 2023





**LWF Meeting of the Heads of Agencies, Geneva, 2023. Photo: LWF/S. Gallay**

undetected between organizations, LWF joined an initiative of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response called the Misconduct Disclosure. The initiative is meant to ensure that all participating organizations, over 190 by August 2023, address questions about potential abusive behavior in reference checks when hiring new staff.

## WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Partnerships are vital to the life and work of the LWF. The commitment and support of member churches, church-related organizations, ecumenical and interfaith partners, as well as collaboration with various agencies of the UN system is essential. LWF engages strategically

with partners to exchange knowledge and share resources, to collaborate, take action, and improve coordination, and to jointly plan and implement programs.

The LWF is ecumenical in its very essence and is intentionally engaged in ecumenical as well interfaith relations. Formal working arrangements with key partners have been confirmed and others have been initiated since the last meeting of the Assembly. These include work with long-standing partners like the World Council of Churches, ACT Alliance, and Brot für die Welt, as well as newer agreements and collaboration with faith-based organizations such as Caritas, Islamic Relief Worldwide, and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

Annual Working Together meetings are held with LWF-related organizations (church-

## SUMMARY OF FINANCES 2017-2022

Year	Income	Expenditure
2017	166	163
2018	150	146
2019	168	152
2020	143	139
2021	162	153
2022	178	177
<b>Total 2017-2022</b>	<b>967</b>	<b>930</b>

(in million Euros)

based funding partners) to discuss strategic alignment, joint programs and work, as well as lay foundations for long-term funding agreements which are essential for long-term planning and sustainability. These meetings have taken place in-person and online, bringing together leaders and program staff from the LWF and its partners. “We are stronger when we address global challenges together,” was a sentiment shared at such a meeting in May 2023. The strength of LWF’s partnerships became quite clear during COVID-19.

LWF partners with many agencies of the United Nations, including UNHCR. Through the extensive work of World Service, LWF has been the largest faith-based partner of the UN refugee body, implementing numerous programs through decades of collaboration. Faith-based organizations and churches are also critical partners for the UN and multilateral institutions, e.g. on the Sustainable Development Goals, as they can offer networks that extend into remote areas that are often hard to reach for national or international actors.

## A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNION

The global financial environment has been turbulent and volatile in the past few years.

With careful planning and monitoring, and high-quality internal controls, the LWF has been able to navigate the instability and remain financially stable. Through all the years, the LWF has shown clean audits and balanced budgets, while building up its reserves. Changes in exchange rates, including a strong Swiss Franc, have made it necessary to monitor the finances very closely.

Membership fees are an important source of revenue for the communion. The continuing support of member churches, sometimes in the midst of their own financial challenges, is a tribute to strong relationships between the churches and the LWF. This ranges from support for theological studies and church relations, to advocacy and humanitarian and emergency relief. The partnership of church-related organizations and other funding partners is vital to the work of the communion.

Changes in the world economy have reinforced the need to transform the LWF into an even more crisis-resistant and sustainable organization. The work on long-term financial sustainability has been ongoing for years. In 2019 the Council affirmed ongoing work on long-term financial sustainability. Diversification of income is one of its cornerstones, so LWF is reaching out to new potential funding partners, particularly for advocacy, diakonia and humanitarian work. In this regard, the LWF established a new foundation in 2023 called

Stiftung Olivenzweig (Olive Branch Foundation) to make it easier to fundraise in Switzerland to support our global activities. We also aim to increase our outreach to private donors. LWF is also looking at how to grassroot the organization in member churches, raising increased awareness about the global communion among Lutherans in the 99 countries worldwide.

LWF's presence as a visible, active, and engaged faith-based organization with the capacity to "stay and deliver" humanitarian assistance makes it a requested and sought-after partner for many UN organizations and other international non-governmental organizations. However, careful planning and timely decision making will be needed in light of changes in global funding practices. This includes ongoing work with the Endowment Fund on strengthening its strategic support through its investment policy.

Since it was set up in 1999, the fund has remained an open and important instrument for the communion, with a value of CHF 14.2 million by December 2022. Its investment income is allocated annually to LWF's program and project activities. From 2017 to 2022, almost CHF 4 million had been distributed to programs and projects.

## PLANNING AND MONITORING OUR WORK

Since the Twelfth Assembly, LWF has made consistent efforts to strengthen its capacities and systems in planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning (PMERL). This has been done in both programmatic departments of the LWF (DWS and DTMJ) and

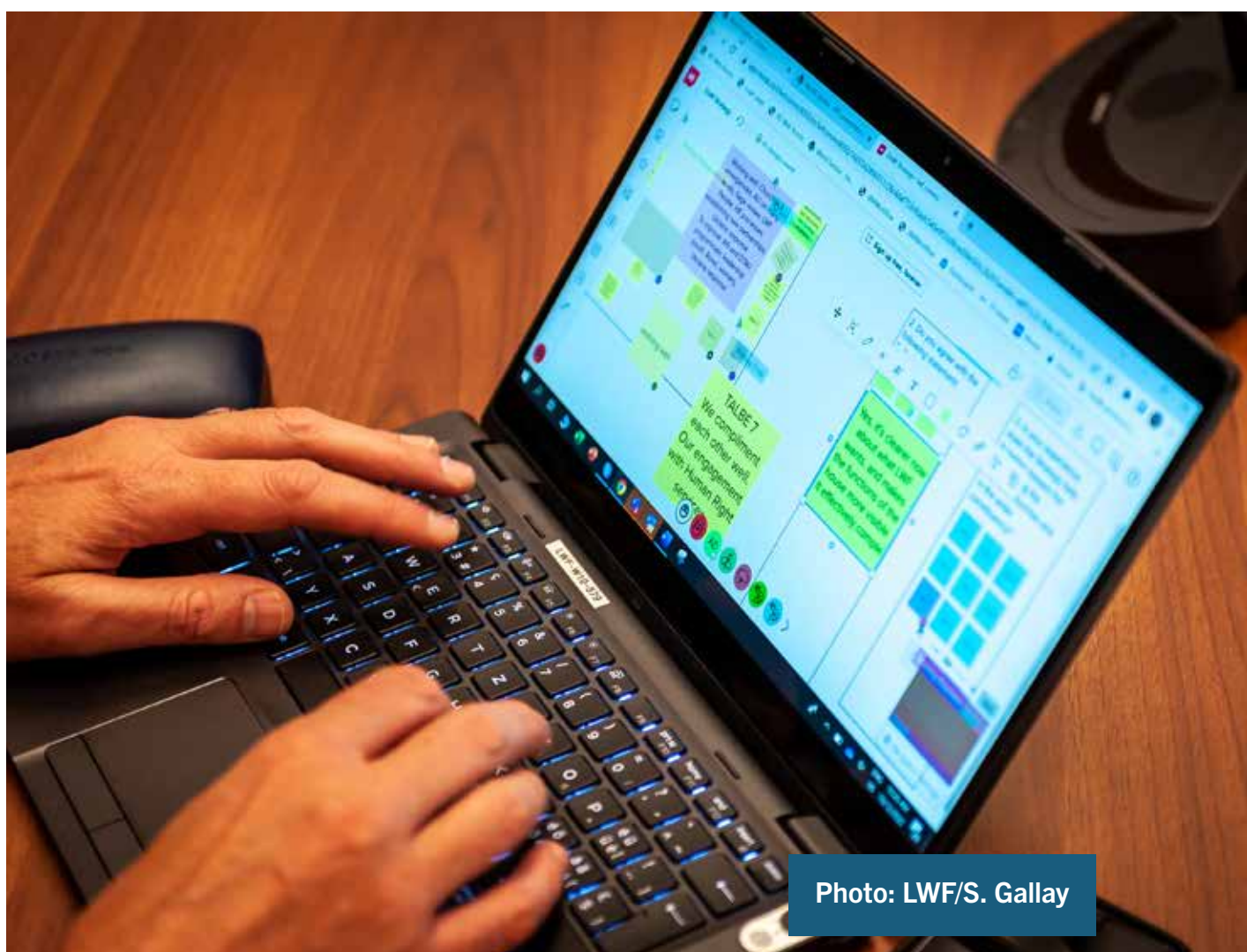


Photo: LWF/S. Gallay



in DPC where a central PMER Coordination function was established in 2021.

LWF has strengthened central planning and coordinating of programs and adjusted the annual planning process and planning calendar. This has led to stronger collaboration between finance and program staff in budgeting, program planning and monitoring of program implementation and expenditure. A planning and performance framework describes the different levels of planning in the CO, from the strategy to annual work planning for departments, units and programs.

In 2020, World Service engaged in a process to assess, establish and test a new IT “ecosystem” for PMERL. This included a data flow from the project management system NewDea and Survey CTO, established to provide aggregated data for World Service country program profiles and budget projections, among other uses. To adapt to increased requirements from partners and donors for the use of digital tools and data management technologies, in 2022 World Service decided to adopt ActivityInfo as the new LWF Project Management System. LWF builds the capacity of country program staff in the use of the new system through training, conducted by global and regional PMERL advisors. It moreover develops guidance tools, including a new PMERL reference book, launched in October 2022, which summarizes minimum requirements and best practices and offers multiple tools.

The overall aim is a harmonized, digitalized infrastructure for PMERL, finance, human resources and security management.

## SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT THE WORK

In recent years, the Communion Office, has invested in information technology and systems development to further strengthen its ways of working by ensuring easy access to information, more efficient online collaboration and process management tools. Microsoft

SharePoint and Teams were introduced for LWF staff in late 2019. These platforms are directly integrated with Office 365 and were rolled out just before the COVID-19 pandemic. SharePoint enables central document access and archiving. It features secure document storage which facilitates file sharing and enhanced collaboration across the LWF.

Teams is used for online meetings and discussions, enabling staff to collaborate irrespective of where they are in the world. Online systems for contracts and payments have also been introduced, enabling easy, paperless handling of daily tasks. LWF has also developed online systems for the administration of scholarships and member church projects.

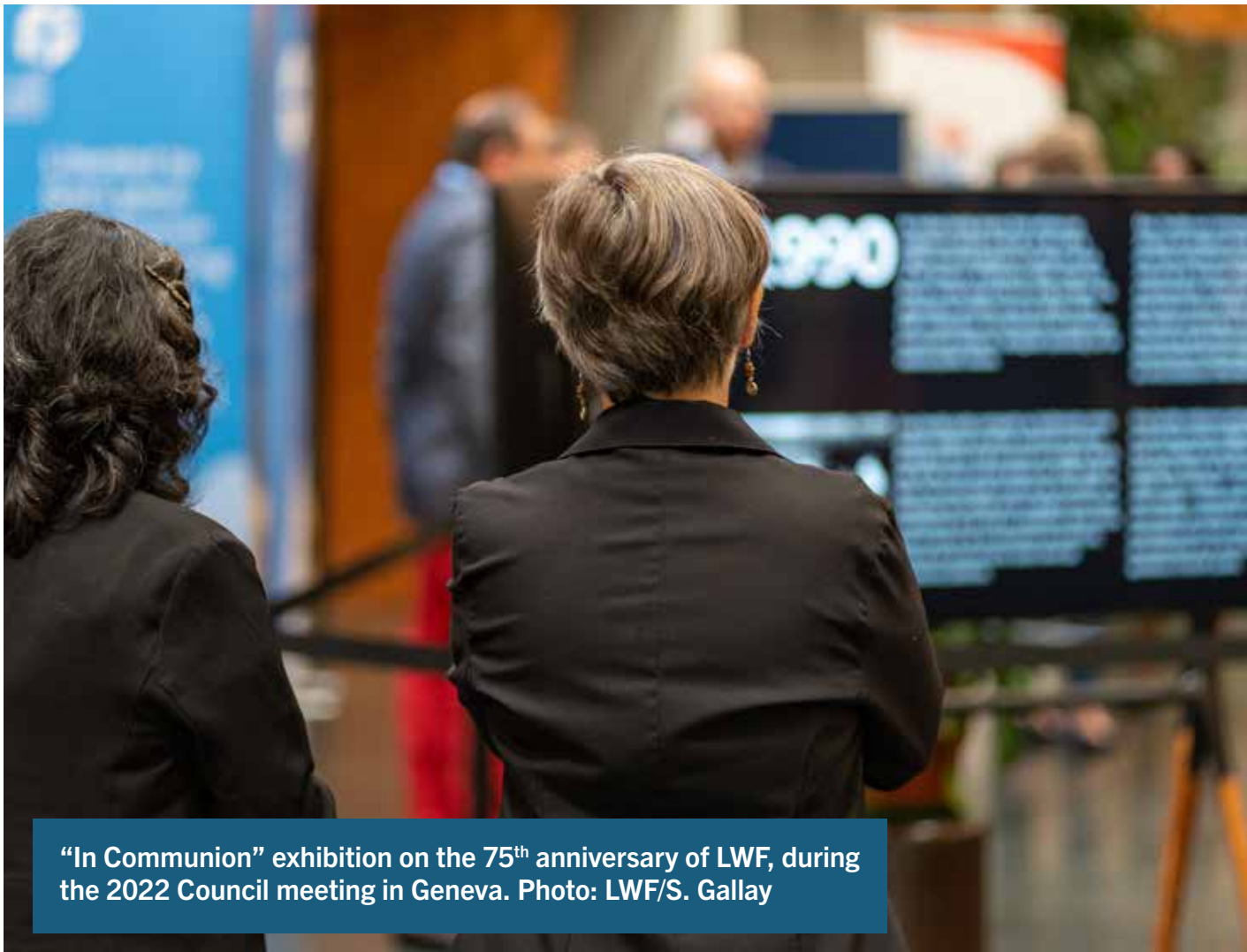
## PEOPLE AT THE CENTER

Staff and their wellbeing are at the heart of the work of the CO. During the period between assemblies, LWF has continued to invest in its human resources. Online recruitment systems have been developed further which enables an easier application and screening process. In 2021, a new online system for human resources information management (HRIS) – LWF People – was launched. It is used for staff onboarding, timesheets, and performance appraisals. It has been rolled out for Communion Office staff and is being tested in country programs. Personnel policies have also been developed further, as is outlined above.

Staff welfare was especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic when personnel all over the world needed to work from home during extended periods.

The continuing education of staff is a priority and numerous investments have been made in promoting learning within LWF. Learning takes place in different forms and in different venues, such as external or internal trainings or workshops; dedicated platforms and tools for information sharing. Monthly staff meetings as well as an annual week of meetings bring all CO staff together, to strengthen connections, share





**“In Communion” exhibition on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of LWF, during the 2022 Council meeting in Geneva. Photo: LWF/S. Gallyay**

information, and engage jointly with key tasks and challenges.

FABO is a main online learning platform for World Service. Established in 2020, FABO Learning Lab is a member-driven learning community for non-governmental organizations, a majority of whom are faith-based, such as DanChurch Aid, Norwegian Church Aid, the National Council of Churches in Kenya and the Swedish SMC Faith in Development. LWF has in the last years developed around 12 tailor-made courses for LWF staff and partners, on issues such as Code of Conduct, Safeguarding Essentials, Data Protection, Anti-Fraud, NewDea Programme and Project Management and Gender Responsive Programming. Several of the courses are available in multiple languages. An introductory course for all new staff in World Service was launched in spring 2023, and around eight more courses are currently under development.

LWF’s goal is to ensure that it remains an employer which offers a good working environment, by having clear policies, a strong focus on staff wellbeing, and good use of systems and platforms to support and strengthen the work.

## SHARING THE COMMUNION’S STORY

Sharing the life and work of the global communion is integral to our success. The Office for Communication coordinates and implements much of that work. Online communication on diverse platforms is at the heart of this work along with media relations. LWF launched a new and modern website in 2022. Initially offered in two languages, it

will be available in the four official languages to ensure wide reach across the globe. The new website platform will also be used for the subsites of departments, programs and projects. There is a large community that follows and engages with the LWF through its website and social media channels, numbering more than 100,000 people in 2023.

In addition to supporting program work with strategic communications, there have been various communications-focused initiatives. These include: a live-stream of worship services from all LWF regions on Reformation Day 2017 to mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary, advent hymns from member churches which have been shared annually over the last few years, strengthened regional and global communications networks that connect communications officers in the member churches with each other and create a transmission belt of information between the local, regional, and global levels. The Office for Communication has also put internal communications in focus with projects such as The Brief, a weekly online meeting place where LWF staff connect with each other and learn about the work carried out throughout the communion.

Communication is a key tool for communion building and for fostering external relationships. Through good communication, we are able share our story in a way that informs, educates, and moves our audience to action.

# APPENDICES

## LWF MEMBER CHURCHES

### AFRICA

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Angola

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Botswana

Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon

Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central  
African Republic

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eritrea

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane  
Yesus

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya

Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church

Lutheran Church in Liberia

Malagasy Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mozambique

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia  
(ELCIN-GELC)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of  
Namibia (ELCRN)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia  
(ELCIN)

The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria

The Lutheran Church of Nigeria

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Congo

Lutheran Church of Rwanda

The Lutheran Church of Senegal

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa  
(Cape Church)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa  
(ELCSA)

Moravian Church in South Africa

Northeastern Evangelical Lutheran Church in  
South Africa (NELCSA)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe

### ASIA

Lutheran Church of Australia

Bangladesh Lutheran Church

Bangladesh Northern Evangelical Lutheran  
Church

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and  
the Holy Land

Hong Kong and Macau Lutheran Church



The Chinese Rhenish Church Hong Kong Synod	Protestant Christian Church in Mentawai (GKPM)
The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong	Simalungun Protestant Christian Church (GKPS)
Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong	The Indonesian Christian Church (HKI)
Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church	The Protestant Christian Church (BNKP)
Arcot Lutheran Church	The United Protestant Church (GPP)
Christ Lutheran Church	Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh	Japan Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Himalayan States	Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church
Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church	Basel Christian Church of Malaysia
Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chotanagpur and Assam	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia
India Evangelical Lutheran Church	Lutheran Church in Malaysia
Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church	The Protestant Church in Sabah
Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Myanmar (Lutheran Bethlehem Church)
South Andhra Lutheran Church	Lutheran Church of Myanmar
The Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church	Myanmar Lutheran Church
Batak Christian Community Church (GPKB)	The Mara Evangelical Church
Christian Communion of Indonesia Church in Nias (Gereja AMIN)	Nepal Evangelical Lutheran Church
Christian Protestant Angkola Church (GKPA)	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Christian Protestant Church in Indonesia (GKPI)	Gutnius Lutheran Church - Papua New Guinea
Communion of Protestant Christian Church (ONKP)	Lutheran Church in the Philippines
Indonesian Christian Lutheran Church (GKLI)	Lutheran Church in Singapore
Pakpak Dairi Christian Protestant Church (GKPPD)	Lutheran Church in Korea
Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP)	Lanka Lutheran Church
	Taiwan Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church of Taiwan (Republic of China)

The Lutheran Church of the Republic of China

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand

## CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE

Evangelical Church in the Republic of Croatia

Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren

Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession

Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Georgia

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia

Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Worldwide

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania

Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Russia and Other States

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia

Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Serbia

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Slovak Republic

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovenia

German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine

## CENTRAL WESTERN EUROPE

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria

Malagasy Protestant Church in France

Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine

United Protestant Church of France

Church of Lippe (Lutheran Section)

Evangelical Church in Central Germany

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Baden

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brunswick

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Oldenburg

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Schaumburg-Lippe

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy

Protestant Church in the Netherlands

Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Switzerland & in the Principality of Liechtenstein

The Lutheran Church in Great Britain

## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Evangelical Church of the River Plate  
United Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile  
Lutheran Church in Chile  
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia  
Lutheran Costa Rican Church  
United Evangelical Church in Cuba Lutheran Synod  
Salvadoran Lutheran Church  
Augustinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala  
Guatemala Lutheran Church  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana  
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras  
Mexican Lutheran Church  
The Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope  
Lutheran Church of Peru  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela

## NORDIC COUNTRIES

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark  
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland  
Church of Norway  
The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway  
Church of Sweden

## NORTH AMERICA

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## LWF WORLD SERVICE

### COUNTRY PROGRAMS

- Angola
- Burundi
- Cameroon
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- DRC Congo (\* 2020)
- Djibouti (\* 2022)
- Ethiopia
- Haiti
- Iraq
- Jerusalem
- Jordan
- Laos (\* 2023)
- Mauritania (\* 2021)

- Myanmar
- Nepal
- Poland
- South Sudan
- Uganda
- Ukraine

\* *closed programs*

## REGIONAL PROGRAMS

- Central America (*includes El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua*)
- Colombia-Venezuela
- Kenya-Somalia

## EMERGENCY PROGRAMS

- Bangladesh
- Syria

## PUBLIC STATEMENTS, MESSAGES AND RESOLUTIONS FROM LWF COUNCIL MEETINGS

### MESSAGES

- To the member churches, on being churches of hope – resisting forces of exclusionary populism (2018)

- Encouraging meaningful participation of youth in the life and work of member churches (2018)

## STATEMENTS

- Israel – Palestine (2018)
- The separation of children from their families at the US-Mexico border (2018)
- Victims of Cyclones Idai and Kenneth (2019)
- Religious persecution and marginalization of and discrimination against religious communities (2019)
- The Situation of Israel-Palestine (2019)
- Global hunger crisis (2022)
- COVID-19 pandemic (2022)
- The situation of Israel-Palestine (2022)
- The war in Ukraine and other conflicts (2022)

## RESOLUTIONS

- Security Council Reform (2018)
- Supporting the Roll-out of Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration (2018)
- The Situation in North-East and Central Nigeria (2018)
- Protection of Biodiversity (2019)
- Commemorating the 2019 Quad-centennial of the Forced Transatlantic Voyage of Enslaved African Peoples to the Americas – Human Beings Not for Sale! (2019)



# LWF PUBLICATIONS

The resources marked with \* are published every year, highlighting ongoing campaigns and reporting on LWF's achievements in its diverse work.

## 2017

\**LWF Annual Report 2016*

\**World Service Annual Report 2016*

\**Rights-Based Approach Local to Global: Annual Report 2016*

*Called to Transform: A Lutheran Perspective on Religion and Development.*

*Global Perspectives on the Reformation: Interactions between Theology, Politics and Economics*  
*Reformatorsche Einsichten zum Verhältnis von Theologie, Politik und Wirtschaft- Perspektiven aus der weltweiten Ökumene*

*Reformation Sunday Liturgy 2017 /  
Reformationssonntag 2017 / Domingo de la Reforma 2017 /  
Dimanche de la Réformation 2017*

*Youth Who Made the Lutheran Communion –  
Testimonies and stories from 1947 to 2017*

*Transformative Readings of Sacred Scriptures:  
Christians and Muslims in Dialogue*  
*Heilige Schriften heute verstehen: Christen und  
Muslime im Dialog*

## 2018

*LWF Advocacy Handbook*  
*Manual de la FLM para la incidencia política*  
*Manuel de plaidoyer de la FLM*

*Peace Messengers Training Manual for Participants*  
*Capacitación de la FLM para mensajeras y  
mensajeros de la paz: Manual de capacitación  
para participantes*  
*Formation des émissaires de la paix de la FLM*

*Report of the LWF Youth Pre-Assembly 2017*

*“Liberated by God’s Grace” – Report of the Twelfth  
LWF Assembly*

*„Befreit durch Gottes Gnade“ Bericht der  
Vollversammlung*  
*“Libres por la gracia de Dios” Informe de la  
Asamblea*  
*« Libres par la grâce de Dieu » Rapport de  
l’Assemblée*

*A faith-sensitive approach in humanitarian response:  
Guidance on mental health and psychosocial  
programming*

*Women on the Move*

*With Passion for the Church and for the World LWF  
Strategy 2019–2024.*

*Leidenschaftlich engagiert für die Kirche und die  
Welt: LWB-Strategie 2019–2024.*

*Con pasión por la iglesia y por el mundo:  
Estrategia de la FLM 2019–2024.*

*Avec passion pour l’Église et pour le monde:  
Stratégie de la FLM 2019–2024.*

*The Lutheran World Federation’s Commitments on  
the Ecumenical Way to Ecclesial Communion*

*Die Selbstverpflichtungen des Lutherischen  
Weltbundes auf dem ökumenischen Weg hin zur  
ekklesialen Gemeinschaft*

*Compromisos de la Federación Luterana Mundial  
en el camino ecuménico hacia la comunión  
eclesial*

*Les engagements de la Fédération luthérienne  
mondiale pour un cheminement œcuménique  
vers la communion ecclésiale*

*Global, Ecumenical, Ongoing: The 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
of the Reformation*

*Limiting Global Warming to 1.5°C – The Climate  
Risks and Irreversible Losses We Must Avoid*

\**LWF Communion Prayer for the 16 Days of Activism  
Against Gender Violence Campaign.*

*Recursos litúrgicos para la campaña por el fin  
de la violencia contra las mujeres – 16 días de  
activismo*

*World Service Global Strategy - For Hope and a  
Future 2019–2024*

*Para que tengan esperanza y porvenir  
Federación Luterana Mundial Estrategia Global  
del Departamento para Servicio Mundial 2019–  
2024  
Pour donner un avenir et de l'espérance Stratégie  
globale du Département d'entraide mondiale de  
la Fédération luthérienne mondiale 2019–2024*

## 2019

*Affirming Women's Human Rights*

*\* Season of Creation Celebration Guide 2019. Web  
of Life*

*SDG Self-Assessment Tool: Waking the Giant*

*Prayer Service for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Joint  
Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification  
Gottesdienst zum 20-jährigen Jubiläum  
der Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur  
Rechtfertigungslehre  
Oración para el 20<sup>o</sup> aniversario de la Declaración  
conjunta sobre la doctrina de la justificación  
Prière pour le 20<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de la Déclaration  
conjointe sur la doctrine de la justification*

*Resisting Exclusion - Global Theological Responses  
to Populism: Strengthening the public role of  
churches in view of populist exclusionary policies*

*Climate Finance for Addressing Loss and Damage:  
How to Mobilize Support for Developing Countries to  
Tackle Loss and Damage*

## 2020

*Loving your neighbor: Encouraging Constructive  
Interfaith Engagement – A Reader*

*Together on the way of the Cross: Praying, reflecting  
and journeying together during Lent. An LWF guide  
for 2020.*

*Gemeinsam den Weg des Kreuzes gehen Karwoche  
Juntas y juntos en el camino de la cruz Semana  
Santa  
Ensemble sur le chemin de la Croix Semaine sainte*

*Intercessory Prayer in exceptional times.*

*Fürbittgebet in der aktuellen Ausnahmesituation  
Oración de intercesión en tiempos excepcionales  
Prière d'intercession dans des circonstances  
exceptionnelles  
(and 10 other languages)*

*Rejoice Now All the Earth! LWF Communion Prayer  
for the Easter Season 2020.*

*Season of the Spirit: LWF Communion Prayer for  
Pentecost 2020*

*"I am hope": Poems by refugees  
« Je suis espoir » – Poèmes de réfugiés*

*The critical role of faith actors in national climate  
debate: Understanding Nationally Determined  
Contributions*

*El rol crítico de los actores religiosos en el  
debate nacional sobre el clima: Entendiendo las  
contribuciones determinadas a nivel nacional*

*Lutheran Identity Study Process Phase 1: Full Report  
and Lessons Learned*

*Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification -  
20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*

*Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre -  
Jubiläumsausgabe zum 20-jährigen Jubiläum  
Declaración Conjunta sobre la Doctrina  
Justificación - Edición del 20<sup>o</sup> aniversario  
Déclaration Conjointe sur la Doctrine de la  
Justification - Édition du 20<sup>e</sup> anniversaire*

## 2021

*Faith-Based Actors and the Sustainable  
Development Goals*

*"Blessed are the Peacemakers": Mediation and  
Reconciliation Skills for the Church*

*Benditas las Personas Pacificadoras Habilidades  
de mediación y reconciliación para la Iglesia  
Benditas as Pessoas Pacificadoras Habilidades  
de mediação e reconciliação para a Igreja*

*Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ,  
the Church: Lutheran-Mennonite-Roman Catholic  
Trilateral Conversations 2012-2017*

*Die Taufe und die Eingliederung in den Leib Christi, die Kirche : Lutherisch/mennonitisch/römisch-katholische trilaterale Gespräche 2012-2017*

*Guidance Note: Joint Engagement of World Service Programs and Member Churches*

*Guía orientadora: Compromiso conjunto de los Programas del Servicio Mundial y de las Iglesias miembro*

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