

## Overall concept and methodology of the Twelfth Assembly

### Introduction

The concept note for the Twelfth Assembly reveals the underlying complexity of the Assembly process with the many objectives which it is supposed to accomplish. The varying expectations and experiences that delegates with their different cultural backgrounds bring along (polity, piety, pressing agendas, hermeneutical and theological approaches, memories and life experiences) add to this complexity.

The concept note also reveals the particular advantage of having the Twelfth Assembly coinciding with the 500th anniversary of Lutheran Reformation. In fact, the strategic decision to connect both the themes of the reformation anniversary (with its programs and processes) with the Twelfth Assembly has the potential to offer to the whole Assembly a strong structure both in content and methodology. Concretely, the communion wide processes of engagement with the reformation anniversary with its local and regional conversations have the strong potential to become the process to prepare the Assembly. The Assembly then is the space where the larger conversation of the global communion of churches on the reformation anniversary themes would take place. Indeed, a global conversation, polycentric and trans-contextual that will discern the gifts and tasks resulting from Lutheran theological tradition and from being a communion of churches that is called to bring witness of the Good News of Jesus Christ, and therefore “to live and work together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world” (LWF mission statement).

The key concept informing the methodology of the Twelfth Assembly is the notion that the Assembly is not a stand-alone event, but that it constitutes a culminating point of a thought-through preparation process and the starting point for the ongoing journey after the Assembly.

The present document is structured along three main chapters:

- ***Journeying towards the Assembly.*** In this chapter, the preparation process of member churches and the delegates, as well as the undergirding methodologies are being presented.
- ***The Twelfth Assembly of the LWF.*** In this chapter, the actual implementation of the Assembly is being explained. Program structure and elements, spaces and methodology are included in this chapter
- ***Journeying back from the Twelfth Assembly.*** In this chapter, the ways are presented to ensure that the wealth of the life and the outcomes of the Assembly flow into further processes of the LWF’s journey and witness.

### Journeying towards the Assembly – content preparation and methodology

The content preparation for the Twelfth Assembly is intrinsically linked to the Reformation anniversary programs and processes at local, regional and global levels. Many of these programs are actually

designed in such a way that they would offer their results, insights and fruits to the Twelfth Assembly (examples: women on the move, self-understanding of the communion, biblical hermeneutics, Global Young Reformers Network). Still, these programs too need to come to the Assembly in a coherent and cohesive way. It would be impossible for the Assembly to receive reports and outcomes from all of them.

In order to achieve this cohesion and coherence, it is proposed to align the preparation process to three specific, already existing resources / processes:

### **Preparatory materials and processes:**

#### **Booklets on the Reformation anniversary's theme and subthemes**

These booklets, to be printed in the four official languages of the LWF, offer short texts from authors representing the diversity of the LWF communion. Each of the booklets includes an ecumenical contribution. The booklets will be made available in April 2015 and will be sent to the LWF member churches with the request to:

- Set up internal, local reflection processes, safeguarding the ecumenical dimension;
- Consider setting up study processes with their bilateral, international communion relationships;
- Bring their reflections and insights to the regional Pre-Assemblies.

Thus, the booklets, designed as a discussions starter and a basis for the themes and subthemes of the reformation anniversary, would become the preparatory material for the LWF Twelfth Assembly. As such, they would provide the basis for local, regional and global articulation of the theological substance, for the discernment of opportunities and challenges for mission, and the dialectics of both the gift and the task to participate in God's mission. The booklets will be the basis, on which the LWF member churches and the LWF communion will reflect on the concept of the ongoing reformation and how the gift of justification by faith alone leads to the imperatives to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in today's world.

#### **The regional Pre-Assemblies**

The regional Pre-Assemblies would become the space to collect, develop and shape the contextual reflection on the Assembly theme and the sub-themes. Regional Pre-Assemblies will be encouraged to reflect on the Assembly themes based on their contexts and experiences and to document these reflections. These contributions would feature in the Assembly process. Written in the form of a regional contribution and based on a common framework provided to the Pre-Assemblies, the regional inputs would be synthesized into one document. Still, the regional contributions would be presented as annexes to that synthesis.

#### **Women and Youth Pre-Assembly**

These two Pre-Assemblies would take up their specific processes (Women on the move; Global Young Reformers Network) and develop their own specific input for the Assembly process. The question of

safeguarding coherence between these specific contributions, and the contributions resulting from the regional Pre-Assemblies would result from the participation of both youth and women in the regional Pre-Assemblies.

## **The Twelfth Assembly of the LWF**

### **The Namibian and the African context**

The LWF Assembly, while a gathering of the global communion, will meet in a specific context, hosted by churches with their specific histories, in a country with its own history, among people with their own memories, challenges, joys and hopes. The program design of the Assembly will safeguard this dialectic between the global and the local. Specific moments to present the local context will be offered, as well as opportunities for qualitative interaction between Assembly delegates and the local context. At the same time, it will be important to safeguard that the Namibian churches and their own context can be situated within their own larger context, in particular of the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) and the African region in general.

Related to the Assembly, but not part of the formal structure or process of the Assembly will be the pre and/or post Assembly visits. These visits will give delegates the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the country and its people and of the witness of the church in the past and present. The planning for the visitation program is under the responsibility of the Local Assembly Planning Committee.

### **The flow and internal coherence of the Assembly: gift and task**

The way in which the Assembly program itself is designed will have significant impact on how Assembly delegates understand the process in which they are participating and, hence, how they will be able to contribute to the Assembly and to play the role they are expected to fulfill. A recognizable framework and an explicit logic of the Assembly program will be key for the accomplishment of the tasks of the Twelfth Assembly.

The thematic approach as outlined in the concept note for the Twelfth Assembly makes reference to the dialectics between gift and task. The LWF strategy applies this dialectics to the very self-understanding of the LWF as a communion when it states that “Communion is a gift before it is a task”.

The way the program of the Twelfth Assembly will be structured will reflect this dialectic. This will be done both in a “horizontal” and in a “vertical” dimension, hence as a dynamic informing the overall program of the Assembly throughout the meeting days (horizontal dimension), as well as informing the daily program (vertical dimension). Both the horizontal and the vertical dimension will enforce each other, helping the Assembly to arrive to the adoption of a final message that will reflect the two poles of the dialectics – gift and task. Hence, the Assembly message will be celebrating God’s abundant grace, and articulating the commitments into which God’s liberating power leads LWF member churches and the LWF communion as a whole.

Throughout the Assembly, the LWF’s commitment to women’s and youth participation will be safeguarded and intentionally promoted, in line with the policies set already by previous LWF Assemblies.

**The thematic program structure of the Assembly:**

The program of the Twelfth Assembly will be constructed along the theme and the sub-theme of the reformation anniversary / Assembly. The overall structure of the Assembly is designed as follows:

- Wednesday, 10 May: Gathering as communion
- Thursday, 11 May: Liberating grace: The gift we receive
- Friday, 12 May: Salvation – not for sale
- Saturday, 13 May: Human beings – not for sale
- Sunday, 14 May: Journeying as communion: Global Reformation Anniversary
- Monday, 15 May: Creation – not for sale
- Tuesday, 16 May: Liberating grace: The task we share

**The Assembly space and program elements**

In order for the Assembly to be able to:

- take governance decisions,
- thoroughly engage with the theme and subthemes of the Assembly,
- engage in spiritual life,
- harvest the gifts of being hosted in Namibia as well as celebrate 500 years of Reformation
- and envision the journey ahead for the LWF communion of churches,

the program will consist of different spaces and program elements each with their own methodology. They should all work together towards a joyful, transformative and outward-looking Assembly and enable the Assembly to undertake its business and activities as described above. Spaces and program elements need to be designed accordingly:

Space		Program element
<b>Plenary</b>	A space where all participants gather	All participants gather for:  Governance sessions Gathering the gifts of pre-assemblies Worship Keynotes Africa night and Reformation Anniversary
<b>Small Groups</b>	A space where participants cluster around particular themes for further reflection.  Smaller groups offer the possibility of more detailed and deeper	Participants gather in smaller groups for:  Village groups  Midday prayer

	reflections.	
<b>Affinity Groups</b>	A space where participants cluster around areas of interest to inspire and offer personal or regional input for the greater communion.	Participants gather in affinity groups for: Workshops Omatala Regional meetings

**Description of the Assembly program elements**

Each element of the Assembly should come together to offer a joyful, transformative, outward-looking and forward looking Assembly. Below is a more detailed description of the different program elements:

**Worship, Eucharist and Reading the Bible together**

Worship, Eucharist and the joint reading of the Bible offers the Assembly to join in plenary and smaller groups around the word and the breaking of bread. Each day starts *before God* - afterwards participants face each other and the world. Each day also ends *before God*, coming back to the place of worship.

The conceptualization of this aspect of the Assembly life is in the hands of the International Worship Planning Committee. Special attention is given to link worship life and Bible Study closely to the thematic flow of the Assembly.

**Workshops**

Workshops and seminars will be offered under each sub-theme, which will present good practices as well as cutting-edge work related to the theme. This may be programs of the LWF, or programs and projects implemented by member churches, LWF related agencies or partners.

These workshops will be an important tool to move the discussion from denouncing to proposing (from “not for sale” to “what is being done / could be done”). They will also help to move the input from a more analytical, narrative presentation (input from plenary) to a more practical approach.

Workshops represent an opportunity for mutual learning, transformation and inspiration.

**Village Groups**

Village groups will be given ample time (90 minutes each day) to process what was heard, experienced and seen during the morning plenary – including the worship and joint Bible reading (to be aligned to the themes of the day).

The proposal is to have small groups (around 20 participants if possible) respecting regional representation as well as the quota for women and youth.

The village groups will represent a meaningful moment of trans-contextual engagement on the basis of the theme and the sub-themes.

A very important task of the village group will be to “compare notes” in view of what the day and its discussions (including in the village groups) mean regarding the proposed elements for a final message (see below: “A note on the final message”). A framework and guidelines for the village groups will be prepared beforehand and training for village group facilitators will be offered to ensure a smooth flow and meaningful participation of all.

### **Omatala – the market place**

A dynamic space will be provided to complement workshops, village groups and plenaries. This space is a multi-space, potentially consisting of several elements:

- Exhibitions and presentations from churches, related agencies, LWF programs and others.
- Thematic creative expressions of art, music, theater.
- Multimedia display gathering input from workshops and village groups as well as expressions from the Assembly. This is also a chance for people outside the Assembly to contribute and participate through online fora.
- Presentations from Namibian member churches.
- Chill out space to connect and discuss in a more informal setting.

The Omatala is a fluid space albeit some activities will have a fixed time-slot that can be consulted in the Omatala program.

### **Harvesting the Fruits from Youth and Women Pre-Assemblies**

It is proposed to continue offering a space for both LWF youth and for women to present their specific input and contribution to the Assembly. Since both youth and women are working on the basis of the Assembly themes, it is expected that their input will easily connect to the input coming from the regions (where youth and women are represented as well). It is proposed to have the youth and women’s messages right at the beginning of the Assembly, so that their contributions can be meaningfully taken up in the Assembly process.

### **President’s Address**

The President addresses the Assembly on the first day and will be based on the theme of the Assembly. Together with offering biblical-theological foundations to the Assembly’s theme, he will reflect on major moments and insights resulting from his service as President of the LWF.

### **General Secretary’s Report**

The General Secretary will present his report taking as a basis and reference point the LWF Strategy “With passion for the church and for the world”. He will reflect on the main landmarks of the communion’s journey during the years 2010 – 2017 and offer vision and perspectives for the journey ahead.

### Keynote (External)

It is proposed to have a keynote speaker addressing the Assembly. This is of importance so that the Assembly does not only relate to the internal processes that have helped to develop content and program of the Assembly, but receives also input from the outside.

### Election of Council Members and President

The LWF Communion Office will produce a small publication including the names, photos and short bios (half page) for each nominated Council member.

It is proposed that the candidate / the candidates for LWF President should address the Assembly.

### Assembly Committees

Assembly committees and their interim reports are crucial for the development of the Assembly process, particularly in view of the governance role of the Assembly. The following committees will be constituted during the Assembly:

- Business Committee
- Policy and Reference Committee
- Editorial Committee
- Credentials and Elections Committee
- Minutes Committee
- Nominations Committee

The Terms of Reference for these Assembly committees will be adopted by the LWF Council at its session in 2016. The composition of the Committees will be acted upon by the Assembly, following a slate proposed by the LWF Council (pre-Assembly session).

### Regional Meetings

Space will be offered for the different regions to come together and to discuss, plan and strategize. These regional meetings are important moments to secure the ground for decisions, particularly those related to governance decisions.

It is also a space for sharing output from smaller groups that will be taken back to the region.

Two program slots are set aside for regional meetings.

### Global Reformation Anniversary

Sunday will offer a full day for worship, encounters with Namibians and celebration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Reformation. It is proposed to use a stadium for this event. The Reformation anniversary will be jointly planned by the Local Assembly Planning Committee, the International Worship Planning Committee and the LWF Communion Office

### Welcome Reception

The Local Assembly Planning Committee is working on an official welcome reception offered by the government of Namibia to the LWF Assembly delegates.

### Namibia Night

The Assembly is invited to Namibia, which has a distinct history with the LWF. Assembly participants will have the opportunity to share in this history and get to know more about the context in which Lutheran churches in Namibia are serving. The Local Assembly Planning Committee is working on a “Namibian Night” in order to introduce to the LWF Assembly delegates the country of Namibia, the Namibian churches and their people.

### The Daily Structure of the Assembly program

With a few exceptions (to cater for the opening of the Assembly and the global Reformation Anniversary) each Assembly day will have a recurring daily flow consisting of the following elements:

<b>Before God</b>	Morning Worship and Bible Study
<b>Discernment</b>	Thematic plenary on main theme and sub-themes
<b>Deliberation and Formation</b>	Workshops for best practice discussions
	Village groups for thematic reflections
<b>Commitment</b>	Plenary discussions and governance decisions
<b>Before God</b>	Evening prayer and Eucharist

The thematic plenary will open with a keynote of max. 20 minutes and be based on the synthesis produced from regional contributions (see above pre-assembly process). The keynote would help to set the stage for the thematic discussion of the day.

The keynote will be followed by two five-minute responses presented by ecumenical relations of the LWF.

The responses will be followed by three recorded testimonies of max. 5 minutes each from three individuals from across the communion speaking to “what salvation (human being, creation) – not for sale has meant in my life.” Time for initial plenary discussion will be offered.

The session would be followed by a session to participate in workshops and discussions, an opportunity to see and learn how churches and related agencies, and ecumenical relations are engaged in practical terms responding to the challenges of the three “not for sale”.

The afternoon will start with village group discussions, an opportunity to process what has been heard, seen and experienced. The village groups will connect their own discussions to the process of drafting the final message (see below “A note on the Assembly message”) offering their own input. This feed-back from smaller groups is vital for the drafting committee to get the pulse of the conversation of the day and to incorporate new insights resulting from the Assembly process into the final message of the Assembly.

The morning plenary session of the following day will offer a slot for feed-back from workshops and village groups from the previous day. The feed-back will have been gathered from the leaders of each group and synthesized to be presented in a concise form in plenary for 15 minutes.

The feed-back should also be posted in the Omatala so that participants can reflect further and harvest the fruits of the discussions to take home.

The afternoon session prior to the evening prayer will be used for governance issues

### A note on the final message

A particularly sensitive process during the Assembly is the work of the editorial committee and its task to arrive at a final message of the Assembly.

For the Twelfth Assembly, it is proposed to take advantage of the stronger emphasis given to the regional processes so that in an iterative process Assembly delegates are able to recognize the evolution of the final message. Basically, the approach is to make the process as open and participatory as possible, by coming back in regular periods to the delegates with the evolving final message.

This will be done in various stages:

Stage 1: Based on the concept note and the thematic approach to the Assembly, the Communion Office will produce an initial document, which will outline the overall structure and some cornerstones for the Assembly message. This document “Structure and cornerstones for the Assembly message” will be run through the Pre-Assemblies for enrichment and validation.

Stage 2: Based on the feedback from the Pre-Assemblies, the Communion Office will refine the structure and cornerstones for the Assembly message. It will in addition include some of the substance that is coming from the regional contributions into a second document “Basis for an Assembly message”. This document, known in advance to Assembly delegates, will become the starting point of the work of the editorial committee that will take up its work during the Assembly (to be constituted by the LWF Council in 2016). From that moment on, the Assembly message and its drafting will be in the hands of the editorial committee, which is accountable to the Assembly.

Stage 3: During the Assembly the specific voices and insights resulting from the Assembly process need to be captured and crafted into the Assembly message. While many issues may be anticipated in

drafts, the Assembly has its own sovereignty and needs to be able to speak its own mind. For that purpose, a methodology will be offered for the village groups to validate what has been developed already, and to offer additional substance where this is needed. This will be done again in an iterative process that will lead to a first reading of the Assembly message towards the end of the Assembly, followed by a discussion in plenary. A second reading, that will include the input from the plenary after the first reading, will conclude with the vote on the final message.

The proposed process needs to be communicated clearly and transparently to the delegates so that the role of the Communion Office in *preparing the ground for a message* is understood, as well as the autonomy of the Assembly – safeguarded by an own editorial committee and the iterative process – is protected.

### **Journeying home from the Twelfth Assembly**

The principle that the Assembly is not a stand-alone event needs to be reflected in the ways it impacts and empowers the LWF communion and its member churches for their ongoing journey that have them “living and working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world” (Vision statement, LWF strategy).

Three dimensions will be of critical importance in this regard:

#### **The individual experiences, learning and insights**

Critical for the multiplication of the outcomes of the Assembly is the way its 373 delegates and the people representing the many other categories of participants will be able to communicate their own personal learning, their insights and their own transformation in view of the unique opportunity that a global Assembly represents. Methodologies and elements supporting this role need to be developed

#### **The Assembly message, its statements and resolutions**

Connected to this, but not uniquely related to the multiplier role of Assembly participants, is the way in which the Assembly manages to speak intelligibly and forcefully, and to do so in ways that its voice is relevantly speaking to local, regional and global realities. A separate communication process after the Assembly will be set up in order to bring the Assembly’s voice to the churches and regions. Regional meetings and processes will have a key role in taking this voice back to their specific contexts.

#### **LWF Strategy and program planning**

The LWF Strategy will undergo review in 2016 already. The outcomes of the Assembly will constitute an important element for further work to be developed in order to propose a revised LWS Strategy to the LWF Council in 2018.