

Report of the LWF National Committee in Germany

1. General comments

Dr. Christine Keim begins work

OKR Dr. Christine Keim took up her post with the VELKD and GNC/LWF on 1 September 2014, as the successor of OKR Inken Wöhlbrand. She is primarily active in the fields of Mission and Development and is responsible for the GNC/LWF Program Committee (formerly called the Main Board). Dr. Christine Keim comes from Stuttgart, in southern Germany, and has so far served in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Württemberg. Periods of research have taken her to Princeton, USA and Bossey, Switzerland.

2. Review of activities during the past year

Interactive internet project “2017 Gemeinsam unterwegs” (2017 – Together on the Way)

For the first time, the DNC/LWF has received an ecumenical text ecumenically. Along with the Roman Catholic Church, we set up a website presenting *From Conflict to Communion* and encouraged discussion on this document. For 32 weeks, about 15,000 people read, commented and discussed the Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue document on www.2017gemeinsam.de. In addition, 62 well-known figures from church and public life replied to 31 “Questions of the Week” on the issues it raised. The project attracted a lot of attention in the secular and church media. On 18 December 2014 the results of the consultation were handed over to Cardinal Kurt Koch and General Secretary Martin Junge at a public event in the German Evangelical Lutheran Church (Christuskirche) in Rome.

Luther Garden project

About 300 trees have been planted on behalf of churches from ten different denominations: Roman Catholic, Reformed, Anglican, Orthodox, Mennonite, Methodist, Presbyterian, Old Catholic, Seventh Day Adventists and Lutherans. Churches from 85 countries have joined in the project. By now, 100 of the 144 LWF member churches are represented in the Luther Garden. The remaining churches have been invited to make contact with the LWF Center in Wittenberg in order to arrange a tree planting. Even if financial participation is requested for the project, money questions should not be a barrier to participation.

Journalist trip to Jordan and Jerusalem

The GNC/LWF conducts its own public relations in Germany to publicize LWF activities and attract donations, collections and other grants. In November 2014 the GNC/LWF organized a fact-finding tour enabling eight journalists to visit LWF programs in Jordan and Jerusalem. Besides prominent coverage in the German press, in particular about the Za’atari refugee camp, related PR efforts achieved a distinct increase in donations, collections and grants from member churches. This income went entirely to the appropriate LWF programs, particularly for winter assistance in Jordan. The substantial response is also due to the fact that the member churches are able to keep in touch with the work of the LWF thanks to GNC/LWF liaison activity.

3. Future plans, programs and priorities

World Reformation Exhibition in Lutherstadt Wittenberg:

The LWF general secretary has forwarded an invitation from the German churches to take part in the World Reformation Exhibition to the LWF member churches. The World Reformation Exhibition will open on 20 May 2017 and run until 10 September 2017. During that time, it aims to present a “unique Reformation experience”. The living heritage of the Reformation is to be the focus of attention in the historical center of Wittenberg. Numerous churches from the worldwide ecumenical movement, cultural bodies and civil society will present their own history of the Reformation and illustrate its future potential on the basis of examples. The LWF Center in Wittenberg offer to coordinate the participation of interested LWF member churches. Accommodation for participants from our member churches is available at Wittenberg College. The LWF Center in Wittenberg (www.lwb-zentrum-wittenberg.de) can give details and answer any questions.

4. Emerging issues of interest to the Council

Cost of the Communion Office in Geneva

The GNC/LWF regards the cost development of the Communion Office in Geneva with great concern. For decades Geneva has been one of the most expensive cities in the world. In addition, the Swiss franc has risen against the euro by approx. 20% since January 2015. That means a considerable rise in administrative costs in Geneva. In the estimation of the GNC/LWF, hardly any LWF churches will be able to absorb this cost development. Hence the DNC/LWF would welcome a thorough debate in the LWF Council on the medium and long-term prospects of financing the LWF Communion Office in Geneva. In the view of the GNC/LWF the purpose of the consultations should be to clearly lower the administrative costs, so that a large share of budgetary resources can again be used for the LWF's programs and for project activities in the member churches.

GNC/LWF Office
Hanover, 16 April 2015